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ABSTRACT

Five issues of the journal of the California Association for the Gifted comprise this document. The first issue focuses on the contributions of the late Jeanne Delp, a leading California educator. Articles by Delp include: "Who is Virgil T. Frey?," "How to Live Successfully with the Gifted Child," "Strangers among the Gifted," and "Developing Leadership." Also included are Delp's remarks on receiving an award and the transcript of an interview with her. The second issue centers on language arts, with the following major articles: "Literature in the Multicultural Classroom" (Linda Brug); "'A Challenging Program for Every Student in Every School': A Conversation with Cathy Barkett"; "Educational Reforms, Values, and Gifted Students" (James Gallagher); "Storytelling, Developing the Movie Screen of the Mind" (Dale Bulla); "A British Kid's Reading List"; "Poetry Pot" (Elaine Wiener); "Philosophy: The International Language" (Jerry Chris); "Alternative Assessment Strategies in Language Arts" (Joan Jacobs); and "TechNet: Dynamic Connections at the Junior High--Using the AT&T Learning Network" (Terrie Gray). The third issue is on identification. Articles include: "We Know They Are Out There--Finding the Gifted Among Hispanic Students" (Pat Phelan); "Reexamining the Foundations of Giftedness" (Richard W. Ronvik); "The Raven Progressive Matrices: A Key to Successful Identification" (Marcia DiJiosia); "Identification of Gifted Talented Students: Transition in Texas" (Jeanette Covington); and "Traditional Identification: Elitist, Racist, Sexist? New Evidence" (Aleene B. Nielson). The fourth issue focuses on the primary gifted child in these articles: "Note-Taking: The Real Secret to Research for Primary GATE Children" (Elaine Wiener); "Managing a Gifted Primary Class" (Nancy Phillips); "Young Gifted Readers" (M. Gail Hickey); and "'A Grand Adventure' A Conversation with Margaret Gosfield." The final issue is on the emotional needs of the gifted and includes: "Painting Visions of the Future: Where Does Gifted Education Fit In?" (Karen Rogers); "The IQ Controversy and the Gifted" (Abe Tannenbaum); "How To Live Successfully with Your Gifted Youngster" (Judy Roseberry); "Parents and Professionals as Partners: A Psychologist's View" (Nancy M. Robinson); "Educating African-American Gifted Students" (Elinor Ruth Smith); "Understanding Intensity in Gifted Children" (Sharon Lind); "Something To Consider Before Referring a Gifted Child for ADD/ADHD Evaluation" (Sharon Lind); and "Helping Gifted Students with Stress Management" (Leslie S. Kaplan). (DB)

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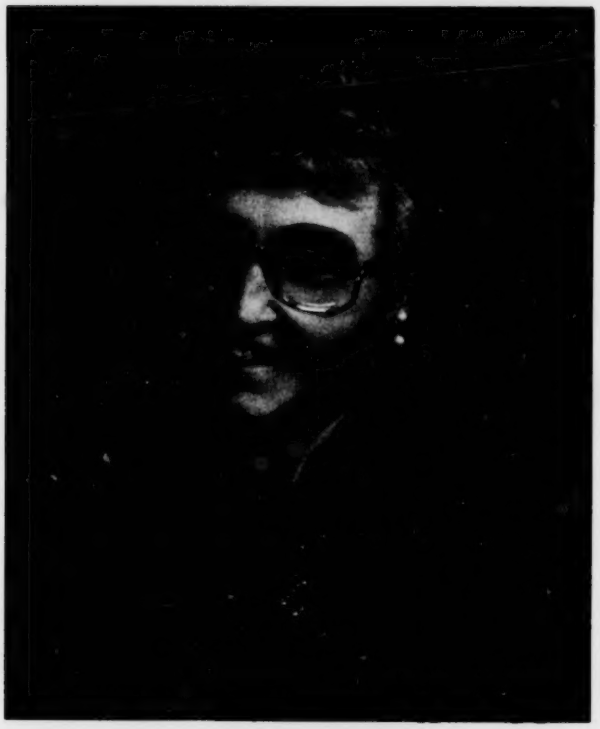
THE JOURNAL OF THE CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION FOR THE GIFTED
VOLUME XXIV · NUMBER 1 · JANUARY, 1994

# COMMUNICATOR

**This issue is lovingly dedicated to Jeanne Delp who was a friend, mentor, teacher and inspiration to us all.**



**Jeanne L. Delp**

1927-1993



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# PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

This *Communicator* issue is a memorial for Jeanne Delp. Interspersed throughout this issue are memories of Jeanne Delp shared by her friends and colleagues.

I too remember Jeanne:

*I remember the millions of chocolate calories we consumed at one sitting to compensate for the session we gave at an out-of-state conference where we felt we were less than enthusiastically received.*

*I remember the day we played tennis during the break at a teacher institute and how each of us believed we were exhibiting tennis talent worthy of Chris Evert. I remember how shocked we were when one of the teacher participants attending our afternoon seminar blatantly said, "You both are better presenters than tennis players. I really was worried about attending your session after I saw you play tennis."*

*I remember the long and arduous arguments we had over politics and educational issues. I remember how convinced we were that we were right and had influenced the other in some significant way.*

*And I remember feeling pride in receiving her accolades after she had heard or read something I had shared about gifted education.*

This publication also contains the spoken words of Jeanne Delp originally presented in major speeches given during her career. Words read do not have the same impact as words spoken, and words seen do not have the same impact as words heard. This printed version of these speeches lack Jeanne's personality and enthusiastic delivery that so thoroughly engaged the listener. As printed text, these words can engage you, the reader, in different ways. It is anticipated that as written text these words will add ideas to your existing knowledge about gifted education, stimulate reflective thought and provide you with a vision of gifted education for your family, classroom, and school district.

This collection of words from Jeanne Delp, like color and line on a canvas, give form to an individual. These words represent the knowledge, values, and individuality of Jeanne Delp. More than just painting a portrait of Jeanne, these words have affected the lives of educators, parents, and students. We appreciate the person who spoke these words and these words are appreciated by those people who were transformed by them.

*Sandra Kaplan*


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**Submission of material**

CAG encourages all interested parties to submit articles for publication. All submissions will be given careful consideration. Photos and camera-ready art work are particularly desirable. Student work should be accompanied by teacher's name and school. Send all material with your name, address, and phone number to Jean Drum, *Communicator* Editor, 7822 Belgrave Avenue, Garden Grove, CA 92641. You may phone Ms. Drum at 714/892-1745.

**Reprinting of materials**

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# CALENDAR

January 22, 1994
**City/County Conference on Gifted and Talented Education**
John Muir High School, 1905 Lincoln Ave., Pasadena
9:00 am–12:30 pm

January 29, 1994
**CAG/Orange County Council for Gifted and Talented Education, 21st Annual Conference**
Estancia High School, Costa Mesa
For information call Karen Grinfeld, 714/879-5834 or Pat Phelan, 714/957-2846.

January 29, 1994
**Bringing It All Together: GATE Across the Curriculum**
Sowers Middle School, 9300 Indianapolis Ave., Huntington Beach, 8:00 am–1:00 pm
For information call Margaret Gosfield, 805/652-7229.

January 29, 1994
**Children's Author Workshop for Parents and Students**
Presenters: Robin Rector Krupp and Jody Fickes
Ventura
For information call Margaret Gosfield, 805/652-7229.

February 26, 1994
**The Black Child Gifted Conference** sponsored by the Central Cities Gifted Children's Association, Los Angeles
For information call Anita Still, 213/751-0132.

February 18–20, 1994
**CIMI (Catalina Island Marine Institute) Weekend**
CAG-sponsored weekend for students, ages 9–13
For information call Anita Still, 213/751-0132.

March 4–6, 1994
**32nd Annual CAG Conference**
***Oasis for Cultural Diversity***
Palm Springs Convention Center and Wyndham Hotel
For information call 415/965-0653.

March 19, 1994
**Mini-Conference for Parents, Educators and Students**
Keynoter: Barbara Clark
Ventura
For information call Margaret Gosfield, 805/652-7229.

May 19–21, 1994
**Student Leadership Conference for 7th–8th graders**
Westmont College
For information call Margaret Gosfield, 805/652-7229.

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# NEWS BRIEFS

## Memorial Contributions for Summer Seminar

Jeanne Delp was very supportive of the CAG High School Summer Seminar. Contributions in her memory to support students for the 1994 seminar may be sent to Judy Roseberry, 18548 Hawthorn St., Fountain Valley, CA 92708.

## Art Contest Deadline Approaches

CAG will hold a juried art contest for students in grades 3 to 12. Entry deadline is January 31, 1994. Send art entries to Cari Matheson, 6968 Stardune Ave., Twenty-Nine Palms, CA 92277, 619/367-4281.

This issue was prepared with many hours of dedicated work by Elaine Wiener, Marge Hoctor, and Judy Roseberry in tribute to their colleague Jeanne Delp.

# "I See Jeanne..."

*by Judith Roseberry*

*Judy Roseberry remembered Jeanne with these words at Jeanne's Service of Celebration on September 4, 1993.*

It is my honor to speak with you today about our friend and colleague, Jeanne Delp.

I had the opportunity to spend some of Jeanne's last earthly hours with her. I want to thank her family—Logan, Barbara, Duncan, and Douglas—for that most precious gift, the gift of time to be at Jeanne's side.

I may cry as I speak this morning. I know you'll understand. But my memories are anything but sad. Some of my memories of Jeanne are quite hilarious, in fact. Some I can even share here today as we celebrate the life of Jeanne Delp.

Jeanne and I had plans to be very old ladies together. We were going to have huge three-wheel cycles with tall flags of some fluorescent color. Not to protect us, you understand, but to warn others. Jeanne's driving was always in two speeds, fast and faster. We knew that wouldn't change with age. We would have Clarice crochet little capelets to wear over our shoulders when we went out. We'd wear strange hats, spots of rouge on our cheeks and go to lunch. We'd order outrageous items, complain about the prices, ask for take-home containers and forget to tip the waitress. And we'd laugh.

There was a lot of laughter in Jeanne's life.

I met Jeanne in 1960 when she came to Garden Grove Unified School District to start a program for gifted youngsters. There were ten of us chosen to be the original teachers of the new Major Work Class. Some of you are here today, and I thank you for your presence. With Jeanne's guidance and leadership and by meeting *every Friday* after school for two and sometimes three hours, we forged a program to serve the gifted youngsters of our district.

I knew I was being challenged as a teacher to learn and mature, to be the best teacher I could be. I knew I was receiving more training than I ever had received at the university about curriculum writing and child psychology. What I didn't know was how my life was being changed because of who Jeanne Delp was.

Jeanne took me into her circle of lifetime learning and into her life. My family and I took Jeanne into our hearts.

Jeanne was a constant source of encouragement. She demanded the best we could offer. She also required that we grow and learn, even at times when we didn't particularly want to grow and learn. Jeanne would never "feed a weakness" as she so aptly put it. We promised her the same courtesy in return.

So many of Jeanne's words live on in her family, her colleagues and friends.

"When in doubt...tell the truth."

One of my favorites and, I might add, very effective, "What's the worst thing that can happen?" Many problem solving sessions began with that question.

"Is this the best thing to do for kids?"

"Choose your battles." I remember sharing with Jeanne what seemed to be a monumental problem at the time. Our oldest daughter, Kary, who was five, refused to wear anything but white anklets. Now you must know that as a good mother, I had purchased white and pink and blue and yellow and all the colors I could find. Jeanne asked me to choose my battle. Did it really matter that Kary only wanted to wear white anklets? Didn't she have the right to have control over some parts of her life? Jeanne told me about her mother's insistence that Jeanne wear a big bow in her short blond hair. Every day, Jeanne's mom would attach the bow and every day Jeanne would discard it somewhere after she left home. Her mother continued to affix bows and Jeanne continued to "lose" them. Jeanne taught me early on that even little people needed to have control over their lives.

"What is your objective?" How many times these words have saved the day both professionally and personally. Clear thinking was required and Jeanne would accept no less.

"Growth is painful." We all learned that from time to time, including Jeanne.

"What you are may make people reflect upon what they are not." This quiet reminder encouraged us in difficult times.

Memories of Jeanne do not sort themselves neatly into professional and personal categories.

As an administrator in the Garden Grove Unified School District, Jeanne monitored and was responsible for several million dollars in categorical state and federal monies. This same woman kept three checking accounts in three different banks. Balancing the check book was not a strength, or at least not a priority. Jeanne would use one account one month, move to bank #2 the next month, etc., until the original account would be balanced and reported by the bank. She took their word for the balance, corrected her book when necessary and was on her way.

Jeanne was highly respected in the state and across the nation for her untiring work on behalf of gifted and talented youngsters. Through her efforts and those of her colleagues, the state of California became a leader across the nation in providing for the unique needs of gifted learners.

She was one of the founders of the California Association for the Gifted. Her leadership, her guidance and her constant interest helped shape and define the organization. Her influence continues to this day.

The Association has designated a special time during its annual conference as the Jeanne Delp Lecture Series. When CAG's desire to honor her in this way was presented to Jeanne several weeks before her passing, she was greatly pleased. Speakers of special note will be invited each year to use that time to enhance and promote the education of gifted and talented youngsters...a task Jeanne found worthy and noble.

Jeanne's ability to problem solve, her clear thinking and her devotion to all children allowed her to continue in the GGUSD in other roles after she left the gifted program. She was a principal, director of instruction, director of categorical programs and director of special education.

Jeanne found the art of friendship to be a noble calling as well. On the wall in her den is a poem by Felice Mancini. The poem was hand-stitched and framed for Jeanne by Judy Felt. The poem reads...

*Sometimes, not too often, we reflect upon the good things,*

*And our thoughts always center around those we love.*

*And I think about those people who mean so much to me*

*And for so many years have made me so very happy*

*And I count the times I've forgotten to say "Thank you"*

*And just how much I love them.*

We can learn this lesson anew from Jeanne, to take time, to take effort, to let those we love know it. Friends are truly the rarest of gifts and should be cherished. Jeanne cherished us as we cherished her.

I see Jeanne in my many memories. I know each of you have memories of your own. How rich we are to all have a bank of Delp stories to draw upon.

I see Jeanne learning to shoot skeet and having the sorest shoulder you can imagine...but going right back for more the next day.

I see Jeanne out on the desert road seeing just how fast this new car could really go.

I see Jeanne challenging the State Department of Education in the most gracious of ways. If an edict from Sacramento came down and Jeanne thought it was illogical (it happened more than once), she would call and say, "I just can't seem to find this in the regs. Could you help me?" The consultants in the department seldom found it in the regs either (they make most of it up anyway) and told her they would get back to her. Delp logic won out again.

I see Jeanne in the thoughts you have shared with me this past week. As you called, I jotted down your words.

*There will never be another like her.*

*This is the end of an era for gifted education and for us personally.*

*She introduced me to my wife and I'm so thankful for that.*

*She was a unique lady.*

*She was a special guiding light in my life.*

*She was a role model for me as I grew to be a professional woman without losing my femininity and loving care for people.*

*She always insisted on specific praise and I want to specifically say how she worked with me to improve my praise-giving to students.*

*She was a leader to be remembered.*

*She was a risk taker, for herself and others.*

J.M. Barrie has said that God gave us memory so we could have roses in December. God has given us memory also so we can always have Jeanne with us.

I believe with all my heart that Jeanne is in a better place.

The rhythm that powers her new being is strong, regular and unfailing.

A nourishing spirit fills her new being with energy, delight and joy.

No defect nor blemish marks her new being.

No pain limits her spirit.

Jeanne is whole.

We will miss you, most dear and special friend.

---

***"Growth is painful."***

*—Jeanne Delp*

# Who is Virgil T. Frey?

*by Jeanne Delp*

*Jeanne inspired the maverick in teachers, all the while encouraging self-discipline.*

I want to share with you this afternoon, a story—a favorite story of mine because it speaks to all of us who are concerned about the education of gifted students. It speaks of many things but most particularly, I think this story speaks to me, at least, of the qualities and conditions which are necessary for a successful MGM program. This is not my story. It is James Michener's story. James Michener, as you perhaps know, before he became well known as a writer, was a social studies teacher in a small high school in Indiana. He went to that high school following on the footsteps of a young man who he learned had been fired for incompetency. So as you listen to this modified story about Virgil T. Frey, I want you to be thinking, "Yes, but what's this got to do with gifted education?" I want you, as you hear this modified version of Virgil T. Frey, to keep wondering, "What is she saying to us that this story says about the education of gifted students?" This, then, with apologies to James Michener, is "Who is Virgil T. Frey?"

The first person that James Michener encountered in that small town in Indiana who spoke to him about the history and the reputation of Virgil T. Frey was none other than the superintendent of schools. His comments to Michener were these: "That man was impossible to work with. He never got anything in on time, he never took advice, and he had an extremely poor professional spirit." The next person who spoke to him about Virgil T. Frey was the principal who, if you can believe it, was considerably more blunt. But he did start out on a positive note. He said to Michener, "You have a great chance here. Virgil T. Frey was a very poor teacher. He antagonized everyone, he was a constant source of friction, and I never had more dissension on my faculty." The next encounter that he had with the reputation of Virgil T. Frey came from a woman of some years who was head of the English department in that small Indiana high school. Her judgment about Virgil T. Frey was that he was an intolerable person. "He not only thought he could teach social studies and made a mess of it, but," so said the head of the English department, "he also thought he could tell us how to teach English better than we were doing. The rest of the staff in this high school felt exactly the same way about Virgil T. Frey. He not only insulted the music department, the art department, the science department, but above everything else, he insulted the P.E. department!" By this time James Michener was anxious to talk to the men in the P.E. department. When he did encounter that coach he said to him, "Tell me about Virgil T. Frey." All the P.E. man would say was, "That sissy?!"

Ultimately, Virgil T. Frey's landlady became James Michener's landlady. And so with this increasing curiosity about Virgil T. Frey he said to his landlady one day, "Tell me about Virgil T. Frey. Did he ever date? Did he like the girls? What did he do with his free time?" The landlady responded by saying, "Him? He courted like it was his sole occupation. He enjoyed every minute of it. I think he finally married someone from around here." By this time it seemed apparent to Michener that the opinion about Virgil T. Frey was unanimous, except he still had this gnawing question inside of him: "Who is Virgil T. Frey?"

One day, early in the school year, he ventured into the far reaches of the corner of the desk and he found the roll books of the previous year with Virgil T. Frey's name inscribed in the teacher's place. Just for the fun of it he took those roll books and he distributed the grades along a near normal curve. And what he discovered absolutely appalled him. There were eighteen percent A's where there should only have been eight. Furthermore, the B's were just as

skewed in the same direction. That made him feel a little bit more comfortable. Finally, he looked further into the closets of that classroom and he felt magnificent when he found two hundred and forty-seven term papers which appeared to have never been corrected—and never, certainly, had been graded. At this point Michener was feeling very smug because he at least corrected term papers.

On that very afternoon as he was reflecting on all of this, one of his sixteen-year-old students, Doris Kelly, whose father was on the school board, entered his classroom. She chatted a few moments and then she paused as if trying to find the courage to ask the question. Finally, she said to Michener, "May I ask you a question?" "Of course," he said. "But you may not like it." "Try me," said Michener. And then it came. "Why don't you teach like Mr. Frey?" "How did he teach?" asked Michener. The answer that Doris Kelly gave him was this: "He made everything interesting. He taught as if everything we talked about was of the utmost importance. He always had a joke. He was not afraid to skip chapters in the textbook. He could teach us to write a sentence better than the English department ever thought they could. And," she said, "everyone liked him." She paused and Michener didn't know what to say so he kept quiet. "None of us likes your teaching very much," said Doris Kelly. "It's so very dull." Michener now tried to find the courage to verbalize his question but the sixteen-year-old beat him to it. "You're wondering aren't you," she said, "why he was fired?" And the answer she gave him was one word. "Jealousy."

> "Jeanne Delp has made a significant difference in the lives of literally thousands of teachers, students and parents. Having her as a mentor and as a friend has had a profound and permanent effect on me, both professionally and personally. I miss her, but she will always be with me."
>
> *Margo Hector, Coordinator K-12 Programs and Services, GGUSD*

Alarmed and confused about what he now knew about Virgil T. Frey, Michener decided he was going to conduct an experiment. So in class the next day, the class in which Doris Kelly was not a member, he stood before the class and he said to them, "Now that we are near the end of this first unit, I'd like to review the big ideas of this unit." He paused, and then said, "You know, the way Mr. Frey used to." Immediately, every member of that class sat up, had their eyes full on him, and Michener paused because he didn't know how Mr. Frey taught. So he said to one of his students, "Tom, will you take over?" Tom came to the front of the room, pulled himself up to his five feet three inches, and said, "Okay, who will dare?" Suddenly, that classroom which had been listening and quiet for several weeks, came alive. One girl said, "I will," and she made the statement that Columbus came to this country more for religious reasons than for commercial ones. Another student challenged that. Another one said, "You're both full of malarkey." Michener winced at the word "malarkey," but he didn't wince at the interest and the thinking and the drawing together of all kinds of information and the willingness to stand and defend it. That discussion was the best discussion James Michener had ever seen in his classroom.

That very night, following that experiment, Michener was on his way back from a basketball game for the high school bringing with him several of the students. He dropped off all but one and this boy said to him, "You know what, Mr. Michener? Class has sure been a lot better the last day or so. More like Mr. Frey's." "Was he really a good teacher?" Michener asked. "I'll say he was. I learned more from him, I read more books, and I liked it too. And furthermore," said this young man, "the best thing about it all was that I learned to trust my own thinking." Michener, who couldn't resist, said, "I thought he was somewhat of a sissy." "Oh, no. It's true he didn't like the P.E. department, but he was not a sissy."

> "Jeanne Delp was a friend, a mentor and an educator of the highest order because she shared her expertise and insight through questions which caused one to reflect and search. Her influence was so pervasive that one has a lifelong professional conscience and personal guide."
>
> *Elaine Wiener, GATE teacher, GGUSD*

That night, after he had dropped off his last passenger, he was so distraught by the confusion of the judgment about Virgil T. Frey that he went to see Dr. Kelly, the school board member. And he asked him, "Why was Frey fired?" Dr. Kelly's answer was this: "Frey thought education consisted of stirring up and creating. He made himself very unpopular. He was excellent with pupils but he made a mess of adult relationships. To tell you the truth," said Dr. Kelly to James Michener, "I'd rather have Doris study under Frey than under you. She'd learn more in the long run." Then Michener said to him,

"Tell me, Sir, did you concur in his dismissal?" And the answer: "I didn't go to the school board meeting that night. I knew that issue was coming up and so I just avoided it. Frey was a disturbing force but he also was a very great teacher."

As Dr. Kelly showed Michener to the door he said, probably in an attempt to make Michener feel better, "I should tell you, Jim, that the superintendent feels the same way. He did everything he could to try and keep Virgil T. Frey."

Michener concludes his story about Virgil T. Frey with this statement, "I have never known a person so fascinating as Virgil T. Frey. Not one member of his staff or any of his professional associates had a good word to say for him. Not one pupil had an unkind word to say for him."

That ends, with apologies to James Michener, his story of Virgil T. Frey. Now, what does that story say to us who sit in this room? What significance, what implications does it have for those of us who have concerns and dedication to the gifted? To me, at least, it says these things. First, it is the teacher who counts, not the structure of the school...not the administrative attitude. Indeed, if you will in California, not the status of the funding. It is the teacher who counts.

I think secondly, this story suggests to me, that Virgil T. Frey was a man who dared to ask questions, to take risks, to see relationships between sacred subject matter and sacred learning experiences. No MGM program of any real merit will exist in an environment where no one—teacher, parent, student, administrator, governor, state superintendent and his staff—takes risks. Notice, I did not say *cannot*. I said *does not* take risks.

Third, I believe that his story tells us that Virgil T. Frey saw learning as a process as well as a product. He judged the results of his teaching by the actions of the kids not just by what they put on the paper. (Remember the term papers and the grade book.)

Fourth, I think also, that Virgil T. Frey had courage. He not only had it; he displayed it. He trusted the kids' ability to learn apart from him. To him there was not just one right answer. He could accept divergent views. He had the courage to confront the subject matter, the methodology, the established procedures. There are, I think, some significant implications in that.

A fifth suggestion that this story reveals to me was that I know that Virgil T. Frey was committed to acting out his belief in kids *in spite* of the hostility that he as a teacher encountered. He believed in those kids and their learning and their needs; and so despite the stumbling blocks, despite the put-downs he continued to act out his belief in kids. Mark well, even though this is our thirteenth annual conference, and even though in the State of California since 1957 and before, we've been concerned about the education of gifted kids, hostility toward gifted programs and students still does exist. Virgil T. Frey recognized, as we must recognize, that what he was—and in fact, indeed what he did, caused others to reflect upon what they did not do. Therefore, he encountered some hostility. That hostility, however, did not deter him from acting out his belief in kids.

A sixth suggestion that comes to me from this story was that Virgil T. Frey loved learning. His commitment to kids was to *their* learning. It is obvious, I think, that he used higher levels of intellectual operation; that he indeed wanted kids to challenge generalizations.

A seventh suggestion from this story is that this was a resourceful man. What he did for kids in that small high school in Indiana did not require dollars in order to get it off the ground. Do you recall the statement, "I learned to trust my thinking"?

An eighth suggestion from this story is that Virgil T. Frey was known. I am certain we could have walked on that campus and asked where the social studies teacher was holding his class, and everyone would have told us—from the janitor, to the principal, to the kids out on the track. I have visited high schools and junior high schools and elementary schools throughout this nation and indeed in this state. I would say, "I am here as a part of a study to visit such and such—your gifted program. Could you tell me where I would find it?" "Well, let's see...I think you'd

"Jeanne Delp possessed many unique characteristics. She was able to take an objective and frank look at education and with her faster-than-meteoric sense of 'seizing the moment,' charge ahead. With willing and unwilling players, she would move past faint hearts, politicking and passing-the-buck to introduce innovation. Her goal was always excellence for gifted students and may I add for teachers of the gifted as well.

"Jeanne loved children, whom she charmed with an ease envied by many teachers. Jeanne understood people, whether five or fifty. She was a teacher at heart and became a loved and loving member of the gifted family of educators, parents and children.

"She was my inspiration and is sorely missed."

*—Dorothy Sisk, Professor, Lamar University, Beaumont, Texas*

***"Never feed weakness."***

*—Jeanne Delp*

have to..." and then they don't know. When a program exists in time and space it is known.

Sometimes the Virgil T. Freys are principals and superintendents. Sometimes they are teachers, parents, district office personnel. Wherever you find them they challenge us. They challenge our concept of learning; they challenge our concept of education; they challenge our concept of teaching; they challenge our concept of program; they challenge our concept of the importance of materials, and of the importance of grades. I wonder, are there any Virgil T. Freys here? —maybe who once were but are not now? Have you ever worked with any? And if you did, how did you react? There's the superintendent who complained that he never got anything in on time or there's the principal who talked about the dissension, or the department head with resentment, or the board member who avoided the whole issue. Or did you react as a staff member who rejected him and ridiculed him? Any successful MGM program requires that we be Virgil T. Freys.

I cannot, however, leave this story without raising a question with you. Who, in fact, caused the dismissal of Virgil T. Frey? Was it the principal, or the superintendent, or the board member, or the staff, or perhaps the man himself? And I think there's a message there too. Each of us can be a better teacher, a better administrator than we currently are and our commitment to the gifted must extend to the education and edification of the uninformed—be they students, parents, board members, governors, or legislators. Virgil T. Frey was indeed noble, but he was also a paradox. It is in his paradoxical aspect that perhaps the greatest messages come to us.

To paraphrase and to modify, I want to close by sharing with you a statement called *Dichotomy*—not written by me but written by a director of instruction in a Southern California school district and tucked away in one of those professional journals we never read.

*"I have supervised a school with efficiency and I've run a tight ship. But many have been strangled by its routine. I have innovated but have left the souls of children untouched. I have claimed throughout educational circles my role as an instructional leader yet I exert little influence on curriculum matters that confront me. I have built an educational program that shines in the country, but I have used it to beam my accomplishments. I have prided myself on the achievements of my students, yet I've offered no access to success for many. I have spoken of commitment, but I have been uncommitted. I have expected others to be overachievers, but yet I underachieve. I have carved a path toward professionalism yet my contributions to my professional organization are so small. I define goals and objectives for others, yet tolerate unclear goals for myself. I live in a state that prides itself on offering the greatest education to each child, and I have chosen educational alternatives to the masses. I am committed to planning, but I spend the majority of my energies reacting. I have striven for harmony with my staff to gain security rather than to tolerate imbalance so that change can take place. Children, the center of the school is my cry, and yet lesson plans are developed for comfort and convenience. I have solved many problems but I have failed to attend to so many more. I am proud to be an educational leader, yet I am ashamed."*

And finally, what you should have been listening to today and talking about is the format for the future. I salute the Virgil T. Freys in this room—those who are now, who once were, and I hope, will again be. But it seems clear to me that the format for the future is in this room and in our own soul searching about the Virgil T. Freys and the paradox of him. Thank you very much.

"Reminders of Jeanne's eloquence, knowledge, sense of humor, quick wit, and commitment to gifted education are evident throughout her speeches. Her words will also remind us of her warmth, caring, and compassion for others."

*Barbara Barnard, Assistant Superintendent, GGUSD*

This poem of Ralph Waldo Emerson was a favorite of Jeanne's and was hung above her desk.

To laugh often and love much;

to win the respect of intelligent persons and
the affections of children;

to earn the approbation of honest critics and
endure the betrayal of false friends;

to appreciate beauty; to find the best in others;

to give one's self; to leave the world a bit better,
whether by a healthy child, a garden patch,
or a redeemed social condition;

to have played and laughed with enthusiasm,
and sung with exultation;

to know even one life has breathed easier because
you have lived-

This is to have succeeded.



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# How to Live Successfully With the Gifted Child

*by Jeanne Delp*

*This speech presents Jeanne's basic beliefs about gifted children, their characteristics and how to capitalize on those traits as parents and educators.*

Tonight we're going to talk about how to live successfully with a gifted child, and there are a few basic premises I'd like to share with you:

- High-level intelligence makes certain demands upon its possessor.
- These demands of high-level intelligence result in certain kinds of behavior.
- If you understand which behavior results from those demands, then there are some suggestions implicit in that understanding which determine how you treat or handle situations so you live more comfortably with gifted children—with less stress and less arguing.
- There are curriculum implications in these demands, and there are psychological implications and family relationship implications inherent in those demands. Teachers and parents of gifted kids need to be aware of this.

Any good textbook on gifted children will have a list of characteristics of gifted students. A large vocabulary is one characteristic, a long attention span is another. Curiosity is another. So, while I'm talking about those kinds of characteristics that all good textbooks list, more than that I am talking about twenty-five separate kinds of demands that, over the years, I've seen ascribed to gifted children because of the presence of their intelligence.

One demand that a high level of intelligence makes on its possessor is a tremendous *craving for knowledge* and a need to feel a sense of progress in what is being learned. That's more than just being curious. It suggests that gifted kids, and indeed I'm sure you can verify this in your own experience with them, are individuals who have a tremendous fund of information and have a need to file it away. They often have a need, at some point in their life, to tell you everything they know. But there is also a certain time—and I've never been able to identify whether it comes chronologically or sequentially in relation to other behaviors or attitudes—when gifted children only *take in* information. If you are the teacher of a gifted child like that, desperately trying to get some evidence of this kid acquiring information when he's at the absorption stage only, you need to know that not giving it back to you does not necessarily mean that nothing is being absorbed.

If you are the father of a gifted student whom you see absorbing all kinds of information about the stock market, pro football, or whatever his particular interest happens to be at the moment, and the child doesn't ever talk to anyone about any of it, you begin to wonder why. Why is it that the child reads, talks, listens and gathers all kinds of information but is unwilling to share it with anyone? This does not mean he is unsocial or unable to use the information or share it with other people in a conversational way. The child may simply be in the absorption stage. I suggest to you that perhaps you need to reflect upon whether or not the child is at the absorption stage. That craving for knowledge, to the exclusion of some of the things that you may think are more important for him to know, is a function of his intelligence.

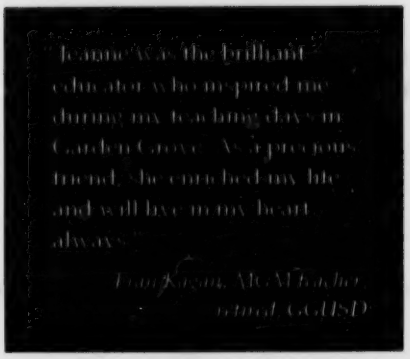
The child may often be frustrated with inactivity or lack of progress in what is being learned. Being asked to do things over and over again, things that he already knows how to do, brings

"Through her deep understanding of the gifted Jeanne brightened our lives and helped raise her children to new heights of achievement and awareness. As surrogate mother, personal counselor and dear friend, Jeanne had a profound influence on our family. She enriched the lives of her children and helped myriads of parents to cope."

*Judy Harman, McAlpin et al*

anger. This anger is reflected sometimes in refusal to do the work. This doesn't necessarily mean that you fail to give him or her a sense of the value of education; it may mean that the child is being given the kinds of questions automatically known so easily that he just figures that it isn't worth the energy or effort.

One of the things that a gifted program needs to do is to provide some ways for gifted kids to feel a sense of progress in what they're learning. They should know where they were when they started in the subject and where they're going. There are kindergarten children who go to school knowing how to read and add and subtract. This early reading ability is not because the parents sat them down and taught them how to read, but because they started recognizing McDonalds signs at age three and could identify a Ford Granada as opposed to a Mercedes at age four or five. (I've often thought we ought to have a new IQ test which would require the identification of cars. Gifted kids recognize the configurations of cars about as quickly as anyone I know.) Kindergarten kids who go to school with all those kinds of experiences, perhaps reading without even knowing it and being very familiar with numbers, get to kindergarten and they hate it. They are learning things they need to know in order to get along in school and indeed that may be true. They do need to have group settings and they do need kindergarten activities, but these kids also need a feeling of progress. Someday they're going to get frustrated and often will react as one child did when he came home from kindergarten the first day crying. When his mother asked what was wrong, he said, "They don't even know how to add in that school." His frustration was not so much with the cutting of paper or playing with blocks, but with the fact that he was not learning anything that mattered to him. The questions, the curiosity, and the craving for knowledge are characteristic demands made upon owners of high-level intelligence. It is, I think, an obligation of schools, programs for gifted students, and parents to help kids who are extremely bright to be aware of their progress. You say to a five-year-old or a ten-year-old or a fifteen-year-old, "Gee, today you know something that you didn't know six weeks ago." That helps the kid have some sense of progress in what he is learning.


Jeanne Kise, the brilliant
educator who prepared me
during my teaching days in
Garden Grove. As a precious
friend, she enriched my life
and will live in my heart
always.
Fran Kissin, MGM Teacher
retired GGUSD

A second characteristic of gifted students is the demand placed upon them by their intelligence to *devour a subject* to the exclusion of everything else. The interesting thing is that *they* pick the subject. The teacher doesn't, the father doesn't, the mother doesn't. The kid does. Maybe when he's seven years old, it's the weapons of the Civil War. The inclination of the adults around him, who know nothing about weapons of the Civil War is to say, "You'll learn more about this when you're in the fifth grade or in the eighth grade or tenth grade." His reaction is that he needs to know *now* because *he* has chosen that as the topic he's going to devour. What happens to a child who does that is that he is often seen to be persistent and stubborn. We then have a ten-year-old who has been reading, talking, and thinking about weapons of the Civil War for three years. We think, "Is he never going to get off the weapons of the Civil War?" The consequence is that lots of times teachers and parents alike keep trying to bring in new books, new topics and take him to different kinds of museums. But that kid is sticking to weapons of the Civil War as if his life depended on it. Adults often view that as stubbornness. I'm suggesting to you that it is, perhaps, a function of intelligence and a demand that must be met: "I need to know all about this and therefore I need to get on with it."

What happens to a gifted kid like that, as a consequence of those intense interests, is that if he's had an interest in astronomy since he was two, by the time he is seven he'll probably have already asked 52,000 questions about the stars, the heavens and all things astronomical. At seven, he has a tremendously larger fund of information about astronomy than any other seven-year-old will ever have. Sometimes a teacher will encounter this child and say, "I know this kid is interested in astronomy." So the teacher gathers together a whole lot of material and brings it to school and says, "Andrew, I know you're really interested in astronomy, and so I've gotten together all of these materials for you, and I'm sure you're going to be really interested in them." The kid, the seven-year-old, looks the teacher right in the eye and says, "I already know about astronomy." One of the negative consequences of this demand of giftedness is that the child may be seen as arrogant when he says, "I know all about astronomy." Maybe all that teacher has to say to him is, "That's marvelous. I'm glad you feel that way. If that's true then you probably know what it is that Michelangelo had to do with astronomy." He'll tell you Michelangelo is an artist. You'll say, "I know, but he also had something to do with astronomy." That sets the kid off and now he will go and find out.

So the "I know all about astronomy" comment is perhaps not a sign of arrogance so much as a reflection on the fact that these kids in their environment have a tremendous fund of information about a particular topic, greater than anyone else they've ever encountered. These are kids whose intelligence demands that they make *observations and see relationships* about all kinds of subject matter. They will do it about important, significant things in school, or they will do it about adult behavior, or insignificant and unimportant things both at school and at home.

A favorite story of mine which illustrates this has to do with a gifted



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> "It is not possible to think of my own work in identifying gifted children or developing curricula for them without thinking of Jeanne Delp's firm but tender guidance and influence. Her wit and wisdom touched my whole family."
>
> *Bea Kranz, one of the ten teachers in the original GGUSD gifted program*

child in the Los Angeles City School System in the '30s. There was a particular classroom organized for these kids, and they had the opportunity to arrive by streetcar. The teacher of the class told me that one of these kids was always late on Tuesday mornings. It wasn't enough that he was late, but he came in carrying pieces of alarm clocks and other kinds of broken objects, sometimes a two-by-four, or sometimes the head of a hammer, broken picture frames, or a part of a musical instrument. There was chaos in the classroom because he had to tell the class everything he had seen. The teacher found out the kid was late because Tuesday was the day the trash was out and thought, "Well, that's probably good for his curiosity." She talked to him about getting his own alarm clock and getting up an hour earlier. She tried to do all the kinds of things to accommodate that need of his, but none of it worked.

So, finally, one day he came in on Tuesday late and upset the entire classroom again. She took him into the cloakroom, because like all adults who work with very bright children and try everything in reasonable fashion, she had arrived at the point where she could no longer be reasonable. She began to lecture him about his sense of responsibility or lack of it, his lack of consideration for other human beings, how she had tried to cooperate with him and why couldn't he understand that she was trying to cooperate with him. He listened to her with eyes glued to her face and she thought for sure that he was really hearing her this time. She talked longer and went on and on. He still kept his eyes on her face. When she finally stopped for a breath, he said to her, "You know something? It's the lower jaw that moves, ain't it?"

He had not heard one word that she had said to him, but he was making observations, he was seeing relationships, and he was commenting on them. That same kind of need for making observations and seeing relationships is a demand which gifted kids must meet.

It can operate in other ways. I'm reminded of a five-year-old who listened to her mother talk about a new refrigerator. One of the things that I think we certainly know about gifted children, certainly in middle-class homes, is that their mothers talk to them a great deal. So, she had talked to her daughter about a new refrigerator and how she had all the information about where to get the best buy.

When Dad came home she proceeded to tell him about how she looked in the newspapers, had gathered all this information, and here was the place to get the refrigerator for the best price. She said all this to her husband after he had picked up the newspaper and sat down to read. He made some strange sound from behind the newspaper. She kept talking and got no response. So the five-year-old gifted kid in that house went up and pulled her by the skirt and said, "Hey Mom, don't you know you should never talk to Dad until after he's finished the newspaper?" The child had made that observation after five years of living with her father. The mother had lived with him longer than that but had not yet put all that together.

Now it has a tremendous impact on you, at thirty-five, when it's a five-year-old kid who points it out to you. The consequence of making observations and seeing relationships and commenting on them can be viewed as either a positive or negative behavior. I'm suggesting to you both as parents and teachers that if indeed that is a characteristic of the gifted student who lives with you or works with you, and you find him making observations and seeing relationships about behavior that you'd prefer not mentioned, perhaps that's a clue that there may not be enough going on in the academic or learning setting for observations and relationship comments that are appropriate.

Gifted individuals place very high standards on themselves. They have a sense of insight coming from this high level of intelligence that says, "I ought to do very well." A consequence of that demand is that the child often starts an assignment and gets part way through and then thinks that this isn't good enough. So he tears that paper up and throws it away, starts over, gets another idea, starts over, gets halfway through that, and decides to start over. Nobody is standing there insisting on a standard of excellence other than the gifted students themselves.

Another consequence of this sense of "I have to do very well" is that gifted children seldom feel really successful,

> "Jeanne Delp was one of those rare individuals whose vast accomplishments exceeded her own original expectations, while never quite reaching her rapidly expanding vision."
>
> *Ed Dundon, Superintendent, GGUSD*

and that is kind of a tragedy. It happens to them because they sense how much they don't know. It happens to them because those adults around them who know them to be gifted and bright expect so much of them. I can recall a time in the California State Study in the late '50s when the law made it possible for school districts to get some financial assistance for gifted programs. We asked 26 gifted eighth graders in a special program in northern California what subject they would choose if they could choose anything they wanted to learn more about. Every one of them said something like this: "I'd really like to know more about atomic medicine, but since I'm not very good at art, I'd



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better take art" or "I'd really like to know about physics, but I don't do too well in English, so I suppose I'd better study English."

Here are kids who are given the opportunity to pick anything they want, with no holds barred, but they're still conscious of what they don't know. They don't choose the thing they are most interested in, but they choose what they think they need to improve in.

One of the things we've done, as adults, is to assume that because a kid has been identified as gifted, he or she is equally gifted in every area. While the reality may be that they could be equally gifted in every area, they probably are not. If you are fascinated by art, any art form, and you give all your spare thinking time to that, then you are obviously going to neglect formal mathematics because you don't have time for it. It may not be that the child would not be successful in math, but rather that his interest and personality lead into other kinds of choices.

Gifted kids are also individuals who question generalizations and challenge them. I think school teachers and parents are given to making generalizations. You may have encountered a situation similar to this one which occurred when I was teaching fifth grade. I made the statement that the only place in the United States where truck farming was carried on was in the Imperial Valley in California. I knew that to be true because that's where I was raised. One of the gifted kids stood up in the back of the room, pointed his finger at me and said, "Miss Delp, you're wrong."

I had several gut level reactions to that. Something went through my gut and my head like, "Too bad this kid has been raised by parents who have never taught him to respect authority." I didn't say that to him, but I'm sure that must have crossed my mind. A second thing that probably occurred to me was to say, "Sit down, David, I'm teaching this class." I didn't say that either. What I said to him was, "That's very interesting, David. What evidence do you have to support the fact that I'm wrong?" He wrinkled up his very small forehead and said to me, "I don't know whether you call it evidence or not, but my dad and I were traveling in Kansas last summer and there was a truck in front of us carrying sugar beets. My dad looked up and said, 'Hey, there goes a truck farmer.'"

I said to him, "David, I think it is just great that you remembered that experience and that you could relate it to my comment about truck farming. I'm glad you shared it with us, but I am looking forward to the time when you can learn to tell me that I'm wrong in a more socially acceptable manner." But you see, his intelligence didn't say "challenge generalizations politely." It just said "challenge generalizations." We as adults, as parents and teachers, have an obligation to help kids learn how to challenge generalizations in such a way that they don't alienate the people they are questioning. I wish we had a few gifted Senators around, or Governors or legislators who would challenge the generalizations about income tax, about how we raise taxes to support our government. I wish we had more gifted scientists around who would challenge the generalizations about smog, who would challenge generalizations and get large sums of money for research grants to solve some of these problems.

As an adult who lives with a gifted kid, you will find your generalizations being challenged, as indeed you should. "How come I have to go to bed at 8:30 when I don't go to sleep until nine?" If you respond to that challenge by saying, "At your age in this house, you go to bed at 8:30," that kid is going to continue to challenge that generalization. The challenge is not so much to deny your authority on bedtime as it is his intelligence saying, "Here's a generalization! Let's have some evidence to the contrary. Challenge it!"

You might try saying to that kid, "That's true. I notice that when you go to bed at 8:30, there's water, books, this and that, and it is 9 o'clock before you go to sleep. Tell you what—I'll make a deal with you. Let's try going to bed at 9 o'clock for a week, and if I don't have to get after you in the morning to get yourself up and off to school, we'll live with 9 o'clock." What often happens is that the kid has challenged a generalization that indeed needed to be challenged.

> "How many times did Jeanne promote the cause of gifted education by encouraging people to participate? I was first introduced to Jeanne by Judy Roseberry when I was considering whether or not to run for the presidency of CAG. In that brief meeting, Jeanne not only encouraged me but helped add real substance to the ideas that would give form to my term in office. Always after, there was that special Delp rapport which Jeanne extended to so many of us."
>
> *Ron Fontaine, Past President CAG*

There are also individuals in the gifted population whose intelligence demands that they should be creative and innovative, seeking unusual and unique ways of doing certain kinds of things. Now whenever you talk about creativity, you really need to define it. What I'm really saying here is that gifted children have a demand placed on them by their high-level intelligence not to do things the way everyone else does all the time. That includes such things as how you make your bed or how the dishwasher should be stacked and unloaded. There is, you know, for most adults only one way to stack a dish-

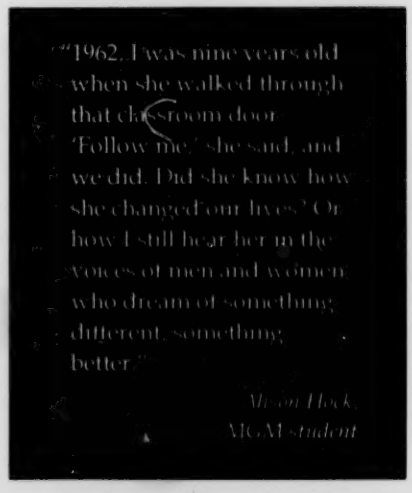
***"When what you are makes others reflect upon what they are not, you get hostility."***
*—Jeanne Delp*

washer, but that's not true for gifted kids. So you say, "I've told you forty-two times not to put the pots and pans in the bottom." And the kid says, "This is polyurethane. It doesn't melt at such and such a temperature, and I don't see why I can't put it up here." If you want to live with that kid unsuccessfully, you fight him on every challenge of a generalization he makes. If you want to live together successfully, I think you'll learn to listen to the generalization challenged and then decide whether or not it ought to be modified.

Let me share a story with you about inventive and creative ideas on how to mow the lawn. I know some gifted kids who have been taught that you mow the lawn across just like this, back and forth. Then they begin to do it in zigs and zags or they write words or make designs. The point of all that is that it's a dull and boring job. The gifted set out to find ways to be innovative in their approach to ordinary kinds of things. Whether that is always a positive consequence is not the question, but the reason gifted kids challenge things and take creative and innovative approaches to ordinary experiences is because of the demand that their intelligence places upon them.

These are kids who tend to be serious minded, which is not to say they do not have a sense of humor. They do. But they are interested at a very early age in world affairs, things adults talk about at dinner tables, and they have a great deal of knowledge and information about those things. They are the kinds of kids who will write, very early, statements about a philosophy of life that will be, for most of us, amazing. Often we suspect, certainly as teachers, that they must have gotten this from home or some place. That's a kid who probably doesn't remember to make his bed every day or to hang his clothes up, but who nevertheless has some very serious aspects to his personality and his being. Those are, I think, a demand that his intelligence makes on him to express some serious-minded concerns.

These are also individuals who have tremendous powers of concentration. They can go and shut off the whole world, and they do that in a positive way. They tune out all the arguments of little brothers and sisters and continue to do the work they're concentrating on. This ability also can shut off someone who doesn't want to be shut off. So you see the second grader or the fifth grader or the tenth grader who's sitting over there looking like he is doing nothing, and you say, "Jimmy, it's time to set the table." No response. "Jimmy!" you say louder, "It's time to set the table." You get maybe a movement of a shoulder. Then if you're like the rest of us, you yell, "You heard me the first time!" He says, "Uh huh," and sits. Finally you have to go and touch him and say, "Get up and set the table." Often as adults we react to that as if that kid has deliberately defied us by hearing us and ignoring us. I'm suggesting to you that the power of concentration and the demand to concentrate on something at the time is so great in these kids that they have the ability to be utterly absorbed in a task with much longer attention spans and to resist all kinds of interruption. Therefore, you may save yourself a lot of anguish if you forget all those steps in between and walk over to him, touch him on the shoulder and say, "Jimmy, you will have to get up now and go set the table." Then you've broken his concentration; your voice has a whole different quality, and perhaps that will help to make living with that kind of concentration power easier.


"1962. I was nine years old
when she walked through
that classroom door.
'Follow me,' she said, and
we did. Did she know how
she changed our lives? Or
how I still hear her in the
voices of men and women
who dream of something
different, something
better."
Marian Hack,
MGM student

There are gifted children whose interests are wide, expansive, covering a wide range of topics and often puzzling to parents. "How come," says the father, "this kid who lives in a house where we are athletically inclined has taken up an interest in Picasso? I don't even like Picasso." Next week, or three months later, it isn't Picasso any more, it's now the statistics related to field kickers in pro football.

Let me share with you the range of experiences of one kid. Parents with these kinds of kids think, "Is this kid never going to settle on one thing?" Contrast this with the parents of a gifted kid who sticks with one thing forever. Here is the comment of a girl who wrote a paper on opera and we asked her why. "Well, in the first place I really didn't want to do it on opera. I wanted to do it on philosophy, on beauty, you know like Marcus Aurelius, Plato, Aristotle, Kant, what the great philosophers' points of view were, what they felt made someone beautiful, beauty in the arts, drama and dance, stuff like that. But then I looked all through both sections of our library, and I saw one little tiny book section called operational philosophy which didn't give me a bit of help. So I went to another library and they didn't have anything. Not anything. I could have gone to the college branch library except I didn't have any way to get down there, and it was ten miles away. So I did not do it on philosophy. I was then going to do it on architecture, but the teacher said it would be better if I did it on something simpler because architecture involves the same theories that philosophy involves, and why didn't I wait until I could go into philosophy. So I decided to do it on ballet. Then all of a sudden I saw this whole great big section of books that just glared out, in bright red and gray letters...O-P-E-R-A. It just caught my eye, and I said, 'Aha, I shall do it on opera!' And that's why I'm doing it on opera."

That is an example of how a gifted child can move from one thing to another very easily. She didn't have to be so totally committed to one particular kind of thing, and she explored interests at a maturity level well beyond her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chronological age. When very young gifted children have interests that are well beyond their chronological age, we often become very concerned about them. For example, the seven-year-old who is always down the street talking to the retired admiral who raises orchids and who is fascinated with the whole process of hybridization and what happens when you cross this kind of orchid with that kind of orchid. The admiral who raises the orchids has talked to him about Mendelian laws, and you think, "Is this seven-year-old ever going to play with other seven-year-olds?" He has such interests at a maturity level beyond his chronological age that he will generally have to find older kids to talk to about his interests. We have to keep that in mind as we evaluate the interests of our kids and the kinds of topics they pick in school which often are not the topics that we assign to their age level. We need some flexibility in assignments so that gifted kids with unique interests well beyond their chronological age will have some basis for selection.

These kids are generally sensitive to some of the values of honor, truth, and other things that you and I have valued for a long time. They will respond to those things in literature; they will take strong stands about integrity, honesty, living up to certain kinds of virtues; and they will be extremely critical of adults who live in the real world with modifications of standards. These kids are sensitive to our value systems.

They are also individuals who will resist routines. Intelligence seems to say, "I don't have to do this over and over all the time. I can't stand it." They resist drill in school. They are the kids who will look for new ways to do multiplication tables. Sometimes, if school is not interesting for them, they want to do their homework in code. They write their names in code, a code they made up, and they don't give you the secret. When they have to do drills, they do it all in their own unique ways. You may see this at home if you have a work schedule for sharing home responsibilities. When this kind of kid is given the same task over and over again, he soon begins to resist by not doing it.

A gifted kid is an individual whose intelligence says to him, "I need time to work alone. I don't always want to be on committees." Sometimes that bothers teachers. Sometimes it bothers parents because the kid needs time alone, but it is because his intelligence demands it. There are lots of thoughts running around in his head. He needs time to think about them, to sort them out, and to put them into categories. So if you are an adult raised in an era when a kid alone meant that something was wrong, then you need to reassess this child and what he is doing with this "alone" time. Is he or she reading or sitting and doing nothing? According to the work ethic we've all had to live by, "doing nothing" (or seeming to) is a bad thing. For gifted kids, uninterrupted time to think, to read, to absorb is one of the demands that their intelligence places on them.

They are also individuals whose intelligence tells them to be intolerant of stupidity, particularly when it masquerades as authority. That sometimes happens to gifted kids. I know a high school student with an intense interest in mythology. It was he who taught me that there was something other than Greek mythology; as a third grader, he talked about Nordic mythology, Roman mythology, Indian mythology. When he was a ninth grader in an honors program, he called me up one day and said, "Miss Delp, I'm in this class that I don't think is going to be beneficial to me." I said, "What evidence do you have to support that conclusion?"

He said, "Well, the other day the teacher was talking about the Greeks and talked about 'MED-ia'. I said to him, 'Mr. So-and-So, I believe I've heard that pronounced Me-DEE-uh.' The teacher's response was, 'Thank you very much. I don't know that I needed you to tell me that, but thank you anyway.' Now every single time he comes to any word that comes out of Greek mythology that has more than two syllables, he always turns to me and sarcastically says, 'How do you pronounce it?' I just don't think that's going to be beneficial to me."

I have to tell you, I agree with that kid. I don't think he needed that experience. He had learned how to correct an adult without being insulting, and he had done it. But that teacher's immaturity made it impossible for him to accept that child on any kind of decent basis. So, we got the student out of that class. Right or wrong, I think that high-level intelligence says to the possessor, "Be intolerant of stupidity, particularly when it masquerades as authority."

The gifted child also has an intelligence which suggests to him to seek order, structure, and consistency of some kind. The child wants to understand why things are the way they are and why people are the way they are. This particular demand of intelligence most often gets him into conflict with adults. Adults have learned to modify behavior in order to get along in the world we live in. These kids are always questioning that; they are individuals who do critical and evaluative think-

> "I took copious notes during my first class in gifted education from Jeanne in 1964. I referred to those notes so often in the next upteen years that even today, almost thirty years later, I still recall most of the material and it is just as relevant today as it was then."
>
> *Maxine Schenck, Coordinator Gifted Education, retired, Orange United School District*

***"Pay close attention to your intuition—your gut feeling."***
*—Jeanne Delp*

ing. They are always saying to themselves and often to all of us, "Wouldn't it be better if...Wouldn't it be better if, instead of going skiing every single Christmas, this family did something else?" And you say, "Well, we've always gone skiing. Everybody likes to ski." And that kid's evaluating. Critical thinking can be seen by adults as "picking at you" when it is really a response to a demand that his intelligence is making to look for better ways to do things. As a consequence of this demand, very often he is conceived to be, and indeed is, critical of others and of himself.

These are kids whose intelligence causes them to be rarely satisfied with the simple and the obvious, and they tend to overcomplicate simple things. When you know that about these kids, and you are teaching them subject matter like math, you can say to them ahead of time, "This is a very simple process. Don't try to make it more difficult." Then the kid listens differently.

There's an item on one of the intelligence tests used to identify gifted kids which sets up a certain situation. The kid is all dressed up, his family is getting ready to visit grandmother, and his mother says, "Why don't you go outside and start walking down the road, and we'll pick you up as we leave. But don't go off the sidewalk. Don't go into the woods." So the kid goes out the door and comes back in a very few minutes, carrying his shoes and holding his nose. In this story the mother takes his new shoes and his clothes and burns them in the fireplace. Then the tester says to the kid "What do you suppose happened?"

Very gifted kids will sit and ponder and ponder and ponder and will very often say, "I don't know." The psychologist, who knows gifted kids and how they overcomplicate simple things, will very often say, "Well, okay, you don't know, but tell me the first thing you thought." And the kid says, "Well, he probably ran into a skunk." The point is that that answer seems so obvious and so simple that the child's thought is, "They can't possibly mean that."

These are kids who are very responsive to "underdog" causes, and in school they often take political positions supporting things that parents may become very upset about. This is not because they are defying the political position of the family, but because they are sensitive, empathetic, and responsive to underdog causes.

They are individuals who have a need, a demand, to have their intelligence responded to. We've often asked parents who are having difficulty with the gifted kid at home, "If you were in this same situation with a very bright adult, how would you deal with it?" Treat the gifted youngster like an intelligent person rather than an intelligent child. An illustration which will make this clear comes out of one of Haim Ginott's books. An adult has a neighbor who comes over to visit, sits down and drinks coffee two or three times a week and always leaves her dark glasses on the table. What do you say to her as she gets up to leave the table? "Helen, your glasses."

You don't say to her, "My gosh, you've been coming over to this house every day for six months and you always leave your glasses!" You don't do that to an intelligent adult, but you do it to kids all the time. If they forget their lunch money, you harangue them about it. If your husband forgot his briefcase, you would say, "Sam, your briefcase." wouldn't you? You wouldn't say, "This is the sixteenth day in a row I've told you not to forget your briefcase!" Gifted children's intelligence demands that people respond to them at a level equal to their intelligence. If adults are to live and work successfully with gifted kids, they need to keep that in mind.

Gifted children will seek out their mental peers, whether they be children or adults.

They tend to be friendly and outgoing. That doesn't mean necessarily gregarious, or that there's no such thing as a shy gifted child. Gifted children generally need to be part of many types of groups, which may not necessarily be the group you, the parent, may prefer. They need a variety of kinds of people to interact with and they will find ways to do that.

The gifted child is also an individual who may be outstanding in certain general areas and only average in some. They are individuals who have a learning pace of their own. Sometimes there is such a thing as a slow-pace rapid learner—a kid who is exceedingly meticulous about acquiring information. Yes, he can learn concepts well above the chronological age. And yes, he or she can read materials that are much higher than the reading level of other kids the same age, but it is done in a meticulous, slow way, and we need to recognize that.

So how can parents and teachers live successfully with gifted kids?

- Keep in mind that they are indeed gifted. That means a unique ability to learn, but they are also children.
- You should love your gifted child as a person, not for any achievements, and the child should know, really know, this.
- You need to keep in mind that your reputation does not rest on how well your child does in school.
- Remember to talk *to* the child, not *at* him.
- Respond to the gifted child as an intelligent person.
- Accept the fact that the gifted may indeed have different views from yours.
- Respect curiosity as a value to be rewarded.
- Remember that the best gift you can give your child is to help him develop self-discipline.
- Remember that this gifted child is not now more valuable in your home just because the school has identified him or her as a gifted student.

What I've tried to share with you here is designed only to give you some new parameters and ways in which to view the behavior of gifted students, both at school and at home. Finally, remember a quotation from Anatole France in terms of how you deal with gifted kids. "The error of enthusiasm is more valuable than the wisdom of indifference."

## The Demands of Giftedness

1. To crave for knowledge—to satisfy the need to feel progress in what he is learning.
2. To feel the need to focus on or devour a subject.
3. To make observations; to see relationships.
4. To place high standards on himself.
5. To be creative or inventive; to seek an unusual or unique approach to an assignment.
6. To question generalizations.
7. To be serious-minded; to be intolerant (usually) of foolishness or silliness.
8. To concentrate—to become totally absorbed in a task; to have a longer attention span.
9. To explore wide interests at a maturity beyond his chronological age.
10. To be sensitive to honor and truth.
11. To express ideas and reactions. (Sometimes seen as argumentative.)
12. To resist routine, drill; to require unique ways of pursuing dri
13. To work alone.
14. To be intolerant of stupidity.
15. To seek order, structure and consistency.
16. To do critical, evaluative thinking. (May lead to critical attitude toward self and others.)
17. To be rarely satisfied with the simple and obvious.
18. To be impatient with sloppy or disorganized thinking.
19. To have his intelligence responded to.
20. To seek out his mental peers.
21. To be friendly and outgoing.
22. To use his power of abstraction; to see and point out cause and effect relationships.
23. To have time for thinking—solitude.
24. To pursue a learning pace of his own. (May be fast or slow.)
25. To be outstanding in several areas, but average in some.

# Strangers Among the Gifted - The Underachievers

*by Jeanne Delp*

*The gifted underachiever has always been a puzzle to everyone—even Jeanne Delp.*

What we are talking about today are the strangers among the gifted—and I want to begin that by capsulizing for you in some very short statements the things which we traditionally and historically, and I believe convincingly, say about gifted kids. Listen to them because I'm going to contrast them later.

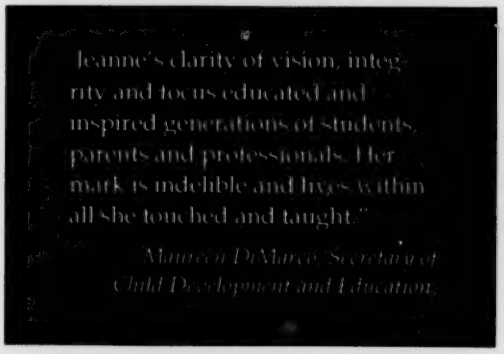
The gifted are great. They are eager to learn; they are curious; they are independent workers; they like school; they have intense interests and a well-developed sense of humor. They are interested in many things and do almost everything well. They challenge generalizations. They have a need to do assignments in creative and innovative and unusual ways. Oh, once in a while they procrastinate and do things at the last minute. To be sure they occasionally are exasperating, but they are overall great! Capsulized, that concept of the gifted is one which we most often express. We talk of the gifted as if they are all alike, and yet in reality, it seems to me, the gifted are the most complex and idiosyncratic—the most unlike one another of all human beings.

Now having said that on the one hand they are great and on the other hand talking about the complexity of the gifted, let me warn you that I think we must be cautious with generalizations. Alfred North Whitehead says, "Seek simplicity and then distrust it." The gifted are great, but among them walk some strangers. The word "strange" suggests unfamiliarity. If you look it up in Webster's Dictionary, it will say "a person with whom one is not acquainted, an intruder, a foreigner: one who is ignorant or unfamiliar with a specific objective." The synonym, of course, is "odd," meaning a departure from the normal or regular. Now most people that I know—keep those definitions in mind, those suggested definitions, an intruder, a foreigner, ignorant with the unfamiliar or specific objective—most people that I know, including educators and parents, seem to be most comfortable with what they know. We fear the unknown. The unknown is strange, and the strangers among the gifted—who are they?

By way of definition, let's talk about Mark. He is a stranger among the gifted. He has a Binet IQ of 145. He can't or won't stay at a task very long. He has a tremendous fund of information, but he doesn't very often choose to share it. He has an interest in unidentified flying objects and he reads and thinks about them often. He expresses his ideas very well, but he almost never finishes an assignment. He's a wanderer in the classroom. You may ask him to sit down and he will, but within a very few minutes he is up and wandering again. He almost always starts assignments, at least the reading and the research and the data gathering part, but there it ends. His parents are usually eager for him to do well in school and have expressed concern about the fact that he is not productive. He is the youngest member of his family. He has two older sisters and one older brother, and those three children in that family have always been productive. He is well-liked, but the kids do get annoyed with him because he goofs off. They often say to him, "How come you never do your work?"

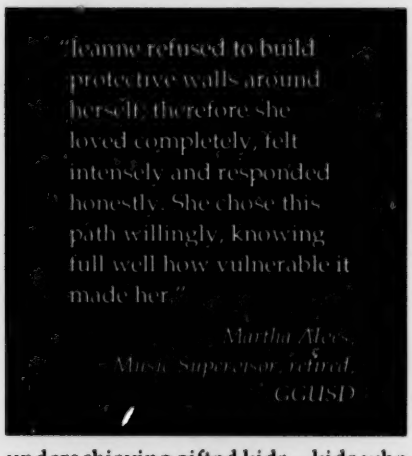
He once gave a spectacular report on UFOs, but he never turned in the written outline that he was supposed to have. When tested orally, he demonstrates knowledge of math and history and English skills and so forth. So obviously, this stranger is absorbing information. A reading test—not what he does every day in reading—reveals that his reading level is three years above grade level. His former teachers have referred to him as a good kid, but lazy. Teachers love to talk to him. When pressure is applied by the teacher to complete the assignment, *it does not work.*

Now that represents, in another capsulized form, an underachiever. Representative of the


Jeanne's clarity of vision, integrity and focus educated and inspired generations of students, parents and professionals. Her mark is indelible and lives within all she touched and taught."
Maureen DiMarco, Secretary of Child Development and Education

strangers, Mark is an underachiever. He's in the MGM program, and that's inexplicable. He's odd. He's a departure from the normal regular gifted kid. He is unfamiliar with how a gifted kid is supposed to perform. He intrudes upon our concept of ourselves as successful teachers, administrators of the gifted programs, or as successful parents. He is, in fact, a stranger among the gifted because he meets all of those criteria.

We must, I think, establish here what we mean when we say underachiever, and I need to clarify that for you. I think there are in reality very few


"Jeanne refused to build protective walls around herself; therefore she loved completely, felt intensely and responded honestly. She chose this path willingly, knowing full well how vulnerable it made her."
Martha Alers,
Music Supervisor, retired,
GGUSD

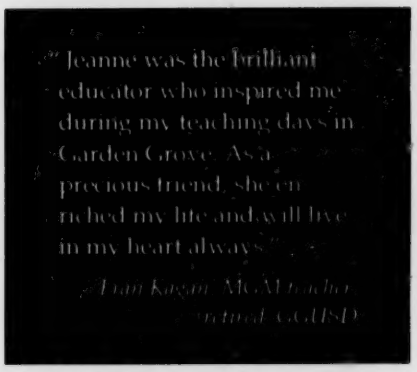
underachieving gifted kids—kids who when tested in some form don't give themselves away and indeed show us that they are absorbing information and that they are productive in terms of learning. But this kid I'm taking about is an *underperformer*. He will not or he does not or he cannot perform in that classroom the way you, the teacher, and I, the coordinator of the gifted program, know that a gifted kid is supposed to perform. So he has the intelligence and we know it. We see evidence of it, but he is not using it.

He refuses to study. It appears that he refuses to take school work seriously. He has a poor tolerance for frustration. He can't stay at a task very long. What do we say about gifted kids? They've got a long attention span. What about Mark? He has a fascination for UFOs and he has a long attention span for that. He only tries the things that he knows he can do well. Most underperformers have one area of expertise. He complains often—this underachiever, this stranger—that his parents nag him about getting his homework done. The stranger among the gifted is often late with assignments, late in getting to class on time and we the teachers think that what this kid needs is to be challenged. Ever heard that?

If the gifted kid isn't performing, you just get the right assignment—I've said it myself—and you lay it on him and he will take off like lightning. When you do that to the stranger among the gifted, the underperforming kid, he just gets more irritable. He is a poor sport, and he blames others for his mistakes. He dislikes personal responsibility. He works at tasks. He works *at* them, but he doesn't complete them. He generally waits until the last minute to do anything. He has very little insight into himself or others. He is sensitive, extremely sensitive. For a kid who appears not to care, he is very vulnerable to the disparaging remarks made about him by other people. He deals with stress in infantile ways; when stress occurs, he is inclined to cry. He cries often whether he's fourteen or ten, or six. He doesn't trust his own thinking. He may often say, "I have this idea: what do you think about it?" Then you respond to it positively but he never does anything with it.

Now how did we get to have strangers among the gifted? What made Mark this way? Should we worry about that group of kids who are strangers among the gifted? Maybe a way to answer that is to look at who we are talking about. Eighty percent of all the kids who are underachievers are boys.

We who talk about opportunities to develop the potential for all children had better worry about these strangers. How did he get that way? Underachievers are made, they are not born. It is not the first-grade teacher who created him, it is not the principal of the school who created him, it is not a bad MGM program who created him. Underachievers are made—they are not born. Underachieving is the student's choice. To me that is a frightening fact. He chooses to become an underachiever and the


"Jeanne was the brilliant educator who inspired me during my teaching days in Garden Grove. As a precious friend, she enriched my life and will live in my heart always."
Joan Kagan, MGM teacher
retired, GGUSD

*why* is what we must focus on.

There are four categories of kids who become or choose to become underachievers. One of them is the tiny area which is not a matter of choice: physiological limitations. They may have vision difficulties related to perception, or they may have hearing deficits, or they may have some neurological problems which affect attention span and their organizational abilities. They are often bed wetters. They may be able to spell very well orally, but they can't do it as well in writing. Their handwriting is unbelievably bad. They are hyperactive and often very verbal kids. And you would say to me, "You're describing an ordinary educationally handicapped, minimally brain dysfunctioned kind of kid," and I would say to you, yes, among the underachieving gifted group there is a very small percentage of kids who are underachieving because of that reason. That is not, however, the primary cause or the cause upon which I think we ought to focus our energies.

A second cause identified in the research is the sociological cause—again a very small percentage. Peers and neighbors and parents in this kind of a setting devalue education, so this kid grows up, even though he's gifted and even though he has tremendous curiosity, he grows up in an environment in which learning is not valued. In fact, it may be put down. Being interested in school becomes akin to being a sissy. That is another minuscule reason for some underachievement.

A third may indeed involve the school setting. It takes a certain kind of environment in any learning situation



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for a kid to know that asking questions is important, remembering facts is important, being able to do problem solving is a valued experience. A student whose school career is filled with classrooms in which asking questions is devalued, problem solving by 6-year-olds is devalued, problem solving by 15-year-olds is devalued, is bored. What happens in the course of being bored makes him very slow paced. He figures the learning game is no good and so he turns it off.

The last reason, then, is the one we have to focus on in detail and with some depth, and it is the reason about which teachers and parents and administrators with courage and conviction, can, I think, do something. This is the *emotional cause*. It is the *prime cause*. Underachievement is a *significant disturbance between the parent and the child*. An underachiever is an angry person. He feels safe in expressing this anger only in very limited, subtle ways, so he picks the educational avenue. To be angry with how you feel at home and to express that anger overtly gets you into terrible trouble and never gets you any kind of sympathy from the very people whom you think are angry with you and whom you are angry at. So you choose education as a way to express this anger. The underachiever is frightened at feelings of anger, and he strikes back at his parents where it hurts—their pride in his accomplishments. He is angry about what has been done to him.

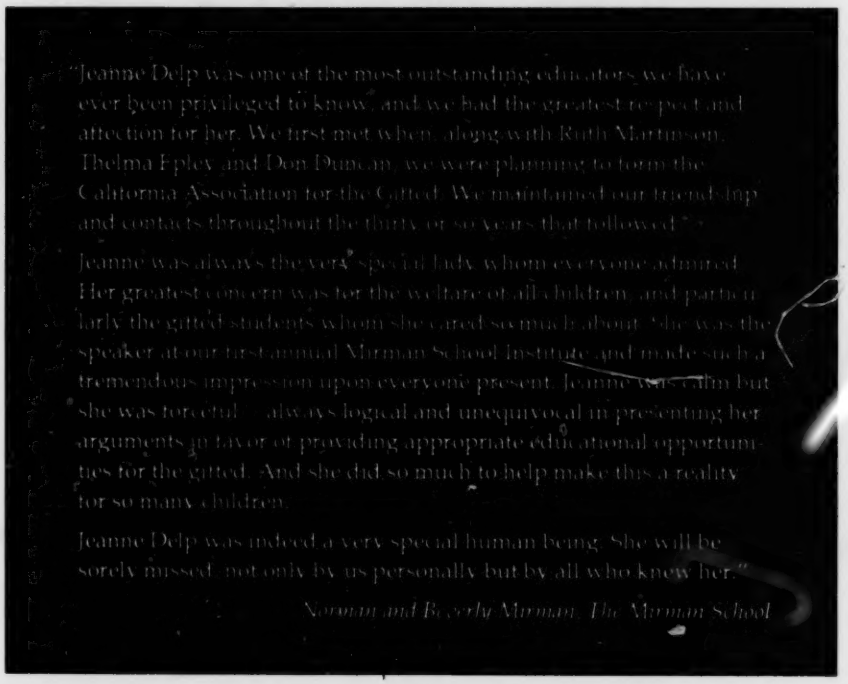
Think about the kid who lives in a home in which the father is a perfectionist and the mother compensates for those too high expectancy levels. The kid is caught in a conflict between parents, and he doesn't know whom to please. So he starts out, perhaps, to please the father, and then his mother says, "You don't need to work that hard." Maybe she doesn't say it in those words, but this is what the kid picks up, so he backs off. So part of the emotional climate in a home is a conflict between parents about how hard you ought to work and how well you ought to do, and we could talk a long time about each of these.

A second category within this emotional environment is that the family is perfectionistic in their expectations. This kid's entire sense of self-worth as an individual, as he perceives it, is equated with his ability to achieve well in school. "I'm only good and valued in this home if indeed I do well in school."

The third category within the emotional climate of the home is a negative relationship with a father who does not (but very subtly) want his son to exceed him. This father often says to the wife who frets about the child, "Don't worry about that. I was just like him as a kid." In essence this says, "Look at me; I turned out OK." So this father, although he is fearful that this kid is going to show that he knows a great deal more about plants, or baseball statistics, or football strategy or whatever, will often side with that kid. "If that school would just have stricter standards... make you stay after school...do your homework...then these things would not be happening to you." There's a whole category of research which has demonstrated that this kind of emotional tenor in a home can and does contribute to underachievement.

A fourth category is the enhancing mother, the excessively enhancing mother—those are my terms—is the mother who is so pleased that her kid is bright and capable and talented. She recognizes it early and she wants to make him feel good about that. So her child goes into the garage. He makes a boat by putting together some two-by-fours, a stick here and there, a piece of palm tree or something, and sort of halfway makes it look like a sailboat. The enhancing mother is so pleased and says, "That's a gorgeous sailboat."

He's so bright, she wants him to do even better, so she says, "Where's the rudder? Why don't you go back and take a little piece of wood. I'll help you and we can put a rudder on." So she has enhanced the format, the concept, the production of the boat. And every time the kid does something, she is positively responsive to what he has done, but she adds to it because she wants him to be aware of all the possibilities. She is trying to teach him how to add to his own thinking and be more creative. A kid who grows up with this kind of an enhancing mother always suddenly comes to doubt his own thinking abilities. When that happens to a child because of too much enhancement, too much overindulgence, too many people, the child begins to doubt


"Jeanne Delp was one of the most outstanding educators we have ever been privileged to know, and we had the greatest respect and affection for her. We first met when, along with Ruth Martinson, Thelma Epley and Don Duncan, we were planning to form the California Association for the Gifted. We maintained our friendship and contacts throughout the thirty or so years that followed."
Jeanne was always the very special lady whom everyone admired. Her greatest concern was for the welfare of all children, and particularly the gifted students whom she cared so much about. She was the speaker at our first annual Mirman School Institute and made such a tremendous impression upon everyone present. Jeanne was calm but she was forceful — always logical and unequivocal in presenting her arguments in favor of providing appropriate educational opportunities for the gifted. And she did so much to help make this a reality for so many children.
Jeanne Delp was indeed a very special human being. She will be sorely missed, not only by us personally but by all who knew her."
Norman and Beverly Mirman, The Mirman School



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whether he or she can do anything alone.

When you reduce all of these contributing factors to the bottom line, what an underachiever is and why he is that way is due to a *poor self-concept*. He fears success so much that he creates failure.

What have we usually done about underachievers? What we've done in school is to call up the parent of the gifted kid and say, "This kid is not getting his work done. Now I wonder if there is some way you could see that he works every day for one half hour." Thus the school becomes another voice which is saying to that kid, "You don't have the ability to manage your time. You can't get your work done at school." The parent now is in the position of having to impose on a kid some of the very things which keep reinforcing his bad self-concept. "Let me see your paper before you turn it in. The teacher says that you get started on things, but you never finish. I guess I need to check your work every day."

Another thing we've done with underachievers is to deny them access to those activities they like and feel successful at until they improve their grades or finish their work. "No baseball until I get a better report from your teacher."

Then we lecture. "I don't understand this, Mike. You are in an MGM class. You're plenty smart, and there's no reason for you not to finish your work." As we lecture, we reinforce his already well-established poor self-concept.

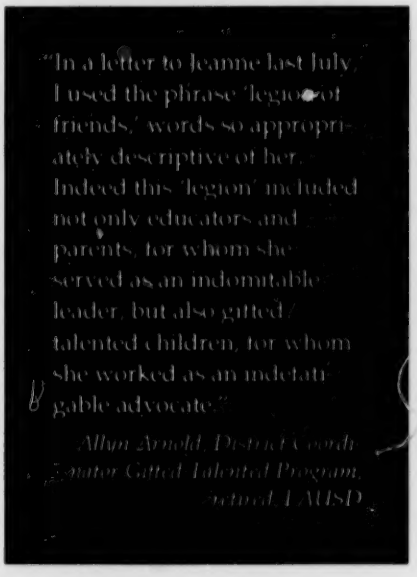
All right, what can be done about this? Well, one of the things we must do about it, and I speak to you whether you are a parent or a teacher or a coordinator of a gifted program or a loving grandmother. It doesn't matter. You have to start gathering data to look for which of those four causes might apply in your particular case. How do you do this? If you're looking for the physiological reasons, the possible neurological impairment, you need to get together with the school psychologist or urge the teacher to do that, and say, "This kid is gifted, but he has a very short attention span. I hear him using a terrific vocabulary when he speaks, but he can't write a sentence, and that doesn't make sense." When a kid doesn't fit the usual pattern of a gifted child, we need to check out whether or not he's having some perceptual problems or some hearing problems

Then if you are the teacher and have a kid like this and you are trying to check it out, it doesn't work too well to say, "Is your father a perfectionist?" or to sit the parents down for a conference and say to them, "You must be a perfectionistic father and an easy-going mother." But you can find that out in a number of ways—ways that have worked for me anyway.

When you get the parents together, and you should get both parents at the conference, you might try saying, "Suppose you're on a plane sitting next to a guy, and you both discover that you have eleven-year-old kids—both boys. And the man says, "Tell me about your son." You say that while you're looking at the father—and it's marvelous. You know what happens? The mother starts to answer. That's a clue that this is an enhancing mother. You let her talk a while, and then you ask the father another direct question, and sometimes it's still the mother who answers. Eventually the father will say something like, "Well, what bugs me is that he's so damn smart, and he doesn't do well in school," or some other thing which gives you a clue.

The other question you ask in that kind of parent conference setting is, "What do you talk to him about?" When you get long silences (and I've had them) it suggests that they only talk *at* him, and you can't build a good self-concept if you're only talked *at*.

So you've gathered some data, you've made some assessments, so how are you going to improve or change the self-concept of a gifted kid in your classroom? Before I respond to that, let me share a little hope with you. Because the self is not instinctive, it is developed


"In a letter to Jeanne last July, I used the phrase 'legion of friends,' words so appropriately descriptive of her. Indeed this 'legion' included not only educators and parents, for whom she served as an indomitable leader, but also gifted/talented children, for whom she worked as an indefatigable advocate."
Allan Arnold, District Coordinator Gifted Talented Program, retired, LAUSD

as a process of experiences, and is therefore remarkably plastic and remarkably changeable. The self possesses infinite capacity for growth and actualization, and the main forces that shape the self are the significant people in a kid's life.

A child's sense of self-worth depends almost entirely—I did not say entirely—on what his parents think of him. A child adopts almost the same attitude toward himself that his parents have adopted. Parents are the earliest appraisers in a child's life. The Rickover research set about in 1965 to improve the scholastic achievement of underachievers by three different methods. The first was to teach parents to verbally and positively acknowledge their student's ability. Second, they got an expert to talk to each of the kids in the study and tell them how high they scored on that test, to sell the kid on the fact that he demonstrated high ability. Third, they got a counselor, a significant adult, to be with this kid on a one-to-one basis and feed him good

***"What is your objective?"***

*—Jeanne Delp*

thoughts and good feelings about himself.

Now which of those worked and lasted? *Only what the parents did.* When those parents' perceptions of their kids were modified and they were giving their kids a different message, then and only then did the students' grades and achievement improve. But guess what? You do not change verbalization patterns of parents in nine months time, and so when the treatment stopped, the production of the kids stopped. Where respect and warmth are missing... where a child's questions go unanswered...where offers of help on the part of the child are rejected...where discipline is based on failure and punishment...where a child is excluded from the parents' emotional life...and where his basic rights are abused...there his self is undermined.

So if you want to modify a child's self-concept, you ask yourself these questions. Have I given my child the impression that I want him to achieve for *me?* Have I placed too much emphasis on his accomplishments? Am I too sensitive to his failures and shortcomings? One way to test that is when he's in bed for the night and it's finally quiet, think to yourself, "What did I say to Anthony today?" Maybe all you can recall is, "Put on your sweater. Have you fed the dog? Don't leave your stuff all over." If those are the only kinds of interchanges you can remember, then perhaps you need to look at whether or not you are being too sensitive to his failures and shortcomings. Do I get upset when he's too disinterested in things I would like him to be interested in? Have I helped him to feel confident that he could grow away from me successfully and be strong on his own, or do I make him feel guilty if he needs me less? Have I avoided sarcasm? That is one of the most devastating and successful ways to destroy a self-concept. Do not belittle kids; that's the way to destroy self-concept.

What if a kid comes rushing in from outside and says, "Mom, give me my 20 cents; I've got to go buy an ice-cream bar." You say, "That's ridiculous, we've got popsicles in the refrigerator." What does that say to him? Your judgment is bad. You could say to him, "I will give you the 20 cents, but before you go to spend it I need to remind you there is a popsicle in the refrigerator." And he says, "OK, give me the 20 cents anyway." That's fine. You gave him some input and if he experiences that enough, pretty soon he will get the message. If you consciously set about to improve a child's self-concept, you deliberately and conscientiously set about to build his independence. He makes decisions and lives with the consequences.

What must the schools do? Schools must provide adequate programs for gifted underachieving kids. There are too many school systems in this state and in this country in which our gifted programs are, in fact, programs only for the *productively gifted kid.* We exclude nonproductive gifted kids. They make us terribly uncomfortable in MGM programs. If you're the coordinator of an MGM program, you may need to learn a language pattern which says to your teachers who keep saying, "Are you sure this kid belongs in my class?" "Yes, he has the potential for this and eventually we will see it all work and come together. Remember we have a program for the potentially gifted kid in this school district. You don't have to do it by yourself this year. Where is it written that if you don't change this underachiever into an achiever in one year, you will be hung." So we must provide adequate programs and we should talk about what some of those are.

One thing we must *not* do with the underachiever is "go back to the basics" with him. If the one thing that a gifted underachieving kid is interested in is whales, let him study whales. What about his mathematics? He's not doing math anyway. What about English? He can get English through whales. What about reading? You mean this kid's not going to read the text that's three years above grade level that everybody else is going to read? Right! He's going to read whales which is eight years above grade level. He's going to interview some whale experts someplace.

You must provide positive support to the child. We must take away pressure. We think this kid is lazy, and so we say "Boy, he is going to sit in this seat and he may not get out of this seat and if I can keep him in this seat for one half hour, we'll finish this paper." So we need to take a look at flexibility and adaptability.

What are some of the other things we can do for this underachiever? We must value, not just tolerate, his interests. We must teach him good study habits. We must help him to evaluate his ideas himself and trust his judgment (not overenhance) and help him feel secure in trusting himself. Parents need to let kids (all kids) know that they also make mistakes. You can be real about it. Tell the kid you forgot to get cat food at the grocery store, and let him know that a mistake isn't the end of the world. The kid who thinks the people that he wants to please never make mistakes is a kid who may never finish a paper because he can't face the possibility of making a mistake. Finally, I must say to you that I'm talking about changing self-concept as if it's some simple thing you do. It's not! But it's also not impossible. Perhaps we could make these strangers into friends if we did as this teacher did.

> *"Mr. Jacobs won our hearts because he treated us as though we were already what we could only hope to become. Through his eyes we saw ourselves as capable, decent, and destined for greatness. He gave direction to our longings and left us with the conviction that our fate can be forged by our own hopes and deeds; that our lives need not be shaped by accident, that our happiness does not depend on happenstance. Mr. Jacobs introduced us to ourselves. We learned who we were and what we wanted to be. No longer strangers to ourselves, we felt at home in the world."* (Between Teacher and Child, Haim Ginott)

# Developing Leadership

*by Jeanne Delp*

*Jeanne felt that leadership was a vital skill for gifted children and that it could be taught.*

Let me start by quoting a high school student—"Leadership must be stimulated and shaped largely by adult efforts and evaluation." If that is true, then there are some significant and powerful messages in that statement for us. *Time* magazine, in August of 1979, asked prominent Americans to name which living American leaders had been most effective in changing things for the better in our society. You will recognize those named as people who have voiced criticisms about the traditional leadership role in our country.

The people who were named in 1979 were Ralph Nader and Gloria Steinem. No one mentioned Gerald Ford. No one mentioned Richard Nixon. No one mentioned Jimmy Carter. No one mentioned anyone in medicine. No one mentioned any political leaders. Nor did anyone name any leaders of large businesses or organizations; and furthermore, no one from the field of academia was mentioned. One of those people who was asked that question said, "I can't think of any leaders." That's 1979. The economic stability of this country is still unsolved. The ecological stability of this country is still unsolved. The educational stability of this country is still unsolved.

And I suggest to you that the topic we are talking about may be among the most significant that we will talk about not just here, but in other places for time to come. I want to share now with you a definition of leadership that is, I think, the underpinning—the foundation for what I want to say to you; and what it is always keeps me aware of some objectives that I ought to have in curriculum, some objectives that I ought to have in the way I interact with students and leaders and non-leaders and people who ought to be leaders but are too "chicken" to do it. This definition goes clear back to 1964. It comes from a business magazine and was developed by a man whose name is Frederick Keppel. He says:

*"Leadership is stirring people so that they are moved from inside of themselves. It is stating goals that excite people and lift their sights. It is setting the personal example; putting enthusiasm into operation; communicating both ways; listening as well as talking. It is rewarding merit and penalizing demerit honestly and fairly.*

*It is the right combination of all of these so that people will do the work that makes an organization successful, and they will do it because they want to do it."*

That's powerful. Leadership is stirring people so they are moved from inside of themselves. It is exciting people and lifting their sights. It is setting the personal example... putting enthusiasm into operation... communicating, both ways, listening and talking. It is rewarding merit and penalizing demerit honestly and fairly. It is the right combination of these so that people will do the work that makes an organization or an idea successful because they want to do that work. All the skills, in my opinion, all the factors in leadership are inherent in that definition. Remember the words: stirring; moving; goals; communicating; rewarding merit; penalizing demerit.

There are three categories of knowledge and ability that I want to talk with you about

that I believe leaders must have. Those three categories are: technical knowledge, organizational knowledge, and psychological knowledge. Let us talk first if you will, about technical knowledge.

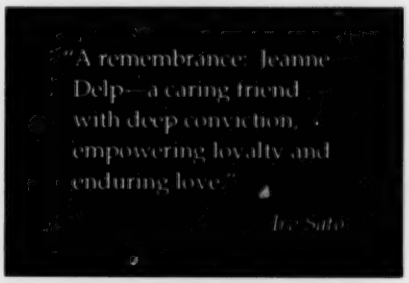
I believe that one of the most significant skills that we must develop in leaders and that leaders must have, are language skills. Almost no idea or organization of any merit that has ever come to fruition has ever come about except through the written word or the spoken word. Oh, to be sure, television has a powerful impact on us. But you know when they start a television show, they start by writing a storyboard, a story line. Somebody conceives an idea and develops the process by which, in words and pictures in television, that idea is going to be communicated. And I need to tell you that one of the things we must do in the public schools of this state, is teach students how to get up in front of an audience and make presentations. We must have speech skills taught to kids.

The Mormon Church—and I'm not a Mormon—has one of the most interesting and well-designed programs to develop speaking in front of groups. And they start not when you become a ninth grader or tenth grader and take speech 1A. They start way down here.

But do we ever teach people to speak extemporaneously? I think not. And leaders must do that. If you're walking down the street or walking through this conference hall or you were at a business meeting and somebody knew that you had some new proposal, and they'd heard about it—about ways to implement in this state a math curriculum that would instantly or almost instantly move us from a very low level of achievement in math to a very much higher level achievement in math...and you're walking between a session and someone comes up to you and says, "I just heard about your idea concerning the development of math. Could you just tell me what it's about? How is it you propose to do that?"

If you cannot do that extemporaneously, and if you can't synthesize what has to be a huge idea in a very few moments, you're going to lose people.

We need to teach students who are going to take leadership roles to be people who can synthesize what they are saying. If they have three hours they can say it in three hours. If they have an hour, they can say it in an hour. If they have twenty minutes they can say enough about it so people will want to hear more. They are able to use the words which clarify issues and which




identify issues. They use the words that help everyone who's listening and themselves recognize the positions that are being taken politically—though politicians seldom tell you truly the position they are taking.

These people who are leaders have language patterns which will ask questions of other people to help clarify positions and identify issues. And they also have the language patterns which help them to discover or uncover, if you will, the patterns of consistency and inconsistency in people who are in positions of authority.

"What is our objective?" is one of those language patterns. "What is your objective, sir, as you suggest or propose?" That is a powerful question, and people who are in leadership roles know when to use that question as things begin to go awry and people are at each other's throats as often happens in the advancement of an idea or an organization. A leader is there who knows when to say, "What is our objective?"

Leaders need the language skills which will help them to recognize relationships that come from expressed ideas and assumptions. Almost all of the statements that leaders make or any of us make I suppose, that are philosophical in nature, sound like wonderful ideas, but they are based on certain assumptions and those assumptions are usually unspoken. The leader doesn't clue you in to what assumptions he's making about the nature of man or the final objectives of this organization. He doesn't usually say, "What I'm about to say to you is based on these assumptions." But the assumptions exist.

Leaders have language skills which teach them how to question without alienating. They are people who can recognize inferences and the fallacious thinking that exists and those kinds of skills don't come because you're now twenty-six years old or forty-two years old. Those kinds of skills come to you because you've had opportunities to work with teachers who help you along the way to develop those kinds of words and those kinds of questions. Leaders are individuals who have a vocabulary of persuasive words. How many of us have ever had a unit in our classrooms or in our homes—units in homes, interesting idea—in our homes where we are pointing out to our children persuasive words that ought to become a part of their vocabulary?

Let me tell you a few persuasive words as examples. "I dare you." That's a persuasive phrase. I dare you to go out of this room, and based on what you've heard here, whether you agree not, just find one kid in your room who you think might have leadership potential. "I dare you," that's the first basic phrase. "I challenge you." "Is it possible?" "I wonder what would happen if..." There's a persuasive kind of questioning phrase.

You cannot be a leader, in my opinion, if you haven't the ability and power to sell. And you sell with persuasive words. Leaders are people who have learned the language of negotiation. I challenge you to look into the literature that exists about the language of negotiation. I dare you to look into the wonderful resources that are available about

social engineering and McGregor's theory of participating management, leadership, and all those things that are powerful tools for all of us to know. Because you cannot sell if you don't have some of those language patterns available to you.

Leaders are people who avoid the use of inflammatory words. Children are the world's creators of inflammatory words. And we often fall into the trap of saying to them, "That's a rude way to say that." When you have a child in your classroom who offends because he uses inflammatory words, what happens to that child if as a first grader and a second grader and all the way through the grades he encounters adults who say, "I heard what you said, David. I have a feeling it's made Susie angry. Would you try to say it in a different way?"

That's how you learn to get away from inflammatory words. Put-downs are inflammatory. And one of the things that the children of this generation are exposed to and that we should counteract is the kind of humor that exists on television. The kind of humor that is modeled for them is put-down humor. And we laugh at it because it's funny on television. We need to make children aware of the fact that put-downs are inflammatory.

"Liar" is an inflammatory word. "*My* executive board" is inflammatory. "You are wrong" is inflammatory. "We've been sitting here for twenty-five minutes, and you've got it all wrong," is inflammatory. "You missed the point," is inflammatory. And we do it all the time as adults. And kids do it all the time. We want individuals to be able to say "You missed the point," but we want it to be said in ways that do not inflame and in ways that bring people together. Those are language skills, people. And language skills need to be modeled.

"Jeanne will always occupy a special place in my thoughts when I reflect upon the several years in which I have been involved in education of gifted and talented students. Her ability to work with teachers or parents in very effective and yet personal ways taught me a great deal about the right way to do staff development. What amazed me the most was, regardless of the size of the group, Jeanne had a way of making you feel that she was talking directly to you. Her presentations at our annual Confratute program were literally works of art. I always marveled at the way she framed the issues, and then went on to deal with them in a manner that provided each person with thoughtful and practical suggestions for better serving the needs of high-ability kids. I have learned so much from Jeanne about sincerity, clarity and effectiveness of presentations that I consider her to be a personal mentor, and I am one of the many persons who has benefited from the work of this truly remarkable person."

*—Joseph S. Renzulli, Professor, Educational Psychology, Director, NRC/GT, University of Connecticut*

I once was the principal in a school in which almost all the children came from single-parent family homes. It was a limited socioeconomic level. It was a limited cultural level. It was limited in terms of any adult models who might have ever talked to children about politeness and graciousness and those things. They'd come into the office, and they'd say, "Gimme the key to the ball room." And I'd say, "Miss Delp, may I have the key to the ball room?" They'd look at me for a minute. "Gimme the key to the ball room." I'd say, "Miss Delp, may I have the key to the ball room?" You know what happened? I didn't have to say, "Say what I said." Eventually they just said, "May I have the key to the ball room?" And I'd say, "Certainly. I'm glad to give it to you." You do that often enough, and you know what happens? The kids pretty soon are coming in and saying, "Please, may I have the key to the ball room?" It's wonderful. And it's simple. And I didn't have to say, "You are being rude. Don't speak to me that way." Language patterns are perhaps best taught by modeling.

A second part of this language—technical knowledge is, I think, research skills. Knowledge is power. And power comes when you know and you acquire information and data. If you are just beginning to be the coordinator of a gifted program, I would urge you to find out what the history is of gifted programs in this state. What are the crises that have occurred over the years? How have those crises been met? What were the mistakes that were made? And why were they made? And if that same crises should occur again, how would you approach it? Knowledge is power. And the acquisition of data is how you get the power.

How do you find out about the history of gifted education? You talk to Jean Lamb. You talk to people who have retired. You look at old pink sheets

***"When in doubt, do what's best for kids."***

*—Jeanne Delp*



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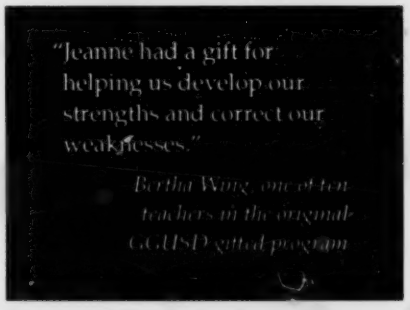
that came out of the State Department of Education. As a leader, you have to seek data from sources which nobody's going to direct you to. You don't get it from books. You don't just get it from the encyclopedia. When you are a leader, and you are seeking the acquisition of data to support a position or to defend a position or to counteract somebody else's position, then you end up having to get that data from enemies of your point of view. You end up often having to get that information from interviews and from talking to people. You hear one person make a statement, and you follow up on it. We need to teach students, gifted and talented students, how you acquire data and how you interview an adult to get information from him when he's too busy and he doesn't want to give it to you in the first place.

Children can learn to do that. They can start out as second or third graders by gathering data about how many television sets there are on the street where they live, and how many kids are in each house? But when you do that, you don't just say to a seven-year-old, "Go and ask all your neighbors." You say to him, "You are going to someone who may not want to give you this information. He has a right not to. What are the words you could say? How would you ask him the question? What if he only gives you part of the answer? What if he's angry because you've interrupted him? What would you then say?"

When we start early enough, by the time we get to high school we have students who are in a position to interview reporters and mayors of cities and school board members and superintendents of public instruction and police officers and individuals who are avoiding the draft and all of those things. They can approach those people and get information that they need from them. Knowledge about the topic is essential for leadership.

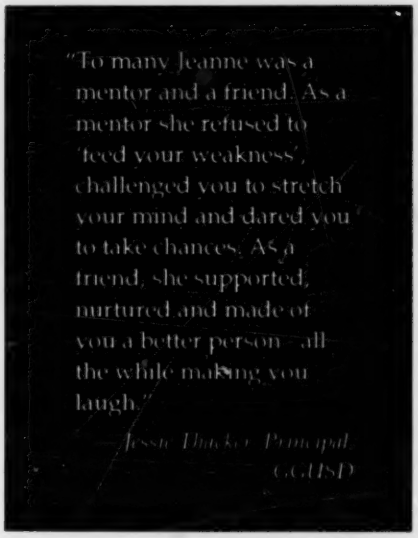
One other aspect of this research skill is that we need to prepare students to anticipate the arguments that they can expect to encounter against the idea. You who work with gifted programs, if you've never sat down and thought until it happened to you, how you would respond when someone said to you, "You mean..." (when you're talking about a gifted program in your school district). "You mean to tell me..." (that's inflammatory). "You mean to tell me that you want to start an elitist program in this school district?" If you've not anticipated that before it happens to you, you don't take the same calmness. You don't take the same knowledge, that you've pulled out of the data that you've been acquiring. You don't take that to the situation.


"Jeanne had a gift for helping us develop our strengths and correct our weaknesses."
Bertha Wing, one of ten teachers in the original GGUSD gifted program

A third category is thinking skills. Alternatives. Options. Find another way. There are people who are leaders about whom it is said, that he always gets his way. And it is said with a bit of disdain. But maybe what it means is that every time that leader walks out of a situation where they're denied an opportunity to do something that they think is important for the organization, what they say to themselves when they leave is not, "Screw you, bud." (Oops!! I forgot this is being taped!!) But what they say is, "I'll find another way." And when leaders are taught to be alternative thinkers, they have a greater chance of success because they keep looking for new ways and new ideas.

Evaluative reflection is a thinking skill. "How would you do it differently next time?" is a question which children in school ought to experience about reports they've given, interactions they've had with the principal when they were trying to get a rule changed, or interactions with the student council. Even if there was a successful outcome, how would you do it differently next time? If you had it to do over again, what would you do differently is a question which kids should hear modeled throughout their school experiences. When they come to positions where they can have some leadership, one of the questions they will respond with is, "How would I do it differently next time?"

"What's the worst thing that can happen to you?" is a question, an evaluative reflection question, which I think we, as adults who interact with students of potential leadership, ought to be using with those kids. Someone suggests an idea in a classroom, and you say, "That has great merit. I think Mr. Anthony would be interested in that idea." "Well yeah, but I...I can't...I wouldn't...I'd be...I wouldn't want to tell him." "What's the worst thing that could happen to you if you went to tell him?" "Well, I might be embarrassed." "True. But you still have the idea. That doesn't change the merit of the idea."


"To many Jeanne was a mentor and a friend. As a mentor she refused to 'feed your weakness', challenged you to stretch your mind and dared you to take chances. As a friend, she supported, nurtured and made of you a better person - all the while making you laugh."
Jessie Hucker, Principal GGUSD

And what happens to people who encounter that throughout their educational experiences and their own experiences is that they discover that once you look at what the worst thing is that could happen to you, it doesn't seem too bad. And that's an important thing for leaders to know.



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Intuitive thinking is a skill, I believe, that leaders need to have. And they need to learn to *value* their intuitive thinking skills. The Oglala Sioux of the Nebraska plains strap on their backs, week-old infants and they take those infants out into the woods, the forests, and they say to them, "Do you hear the sound of the deer walking? Do you hear the wind blowing?" And they keep this up all the time. This does several things. It makes you aware of your environment. It says to you because you experience it, "I have the capacity and the ability to pick out of what's happening here, some intuitive responses that are correct, and I need to pay attention to those intuitive responses." The Oglala Sioux do that to teach their kids receptivity to their environment.

The second large category that I mentioned to you is organizational knowledge. And I'll tell you now that I believe that one of the skills that we must teach children, students of all ages, is the ability to differentiate between long-term goals and short-term goals. Too many great, good, fine, worthy ideas, never come to fruition because the leaders only focus on the short-term goal. "Let's put this conference on, and let's have it go smoothly." And then you say to the people who make that short-term goal, "What is it that we hope this organization will have accomplished five years from now that will have a significant impact on the status of gifted education in this state?" There are long silences because we're already thinking about next year's conference. Those are short-term goals.

We need to teach kids to be able to differentiate between long-term goals and short-term goals. We need to say to a high school student or an eighth grader or third grader, "What you just told me you're going to do about your research project is a short-term goal. You said that by Friday you wanted to finish taking the notes out of that particular book. That is a short-term goal. That is a good identification of it. Tell me what your long-term goal is for this research project. When it's all finished, how do you want to feel about it? How do you want it to look?" People don't get to be seventeen years old and suddenly become able to differentiate between long-term and short-term goals if they have never heard the words, and if they have never had it modeled for them.

The second part of this organizational knowledge that students need to learn and that we must teach and that we have been negligent about are Robert's Rules of Order. You all know Robert's Rules of Order. You have the power to stop a decision from being made that you think may be detrimental to your organization or to your idea. You may not be able to prevent that decision being made forever because you know about tabling motions or some other kind of rule that exists within that book, but you have some additional power. And you don't even have to be absolutely accurate about it. You should be, but you don't have to be, because you can say, "Well, in Robert's Rules of Order it says..." and there won't be another person around that table who's got the vaguest idea of what's in Robert's Rules of Order.

Do not misunderstand me. I am not saying that you should hoodwink people. I'm saying there's a resource of power, a resource for leadership that we ought to teach students. And yet, there's a wonderful unit that has been designed, probably by some classroom teacher, that you start out with way down in the third, fourth, fifth grade. Kids can make motions, they can second motions, they can amend motions with the permission of the person who made the motion. We just have to teach them how to do it. We have to teach them how to run a meeting and control it in the best sense of the word—control the constant talker who prevents you from accomplishing your goals or the accomplishments that you hope to make for that organization.

How do you control the griper? How do you control the hostile person who exists in every single group of kids or adults where someone's trying to move an idea ahead? How do you control that person? And I don't mean control by restricting or restraining. I'm meaning how do you let them say what they need to say, but not get everyone off the track so that they're now into the hostility as opposed to what the long-term objective is? Or what the objective of that particular meeting is? That skill is a skill which we need to teach to people who are leaders. There are people with fine ideas who cannot successfully be the manager of a meeting and have anything productive come out of it. Is it because they lack intelli-

"My most treasured remembrance of Jeanne Delp was of a time when she literally prevented me from doing great harm to myself and possibly to others. At a point in my life when I was caught up in an increasing number of opportunities, all exciting, all time consuming, and all demanding more and more energy, Jeanne took it upon herself to become my mentor.

We were working together on a CAG committee and after spending the better part of a day together, Jeanne took me aside and frankly and very personally shared with me experiences from her life that she believed related to what she was observing in mine. Not only did she reveal herself, but she gave me a direct warning of consequences she had experienced with such sincerity that I could not ignore her advice.

Her guidance and loving support allowed me to make changes that I now know prevented serious physical and mental anguish in my life.

For me, Jeanne Delp was a special gift."

*Barbara Clark, Professor, California State University Los Angeles, Past President NAGC*



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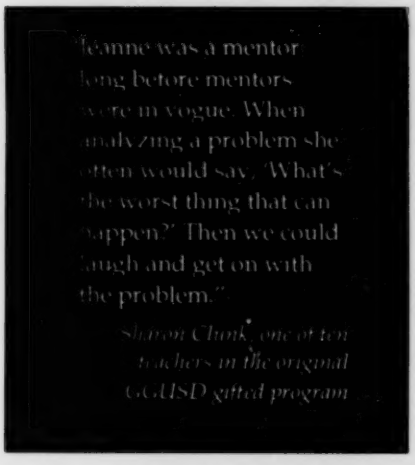
gence? No. Is it because they lack ego? Perhaps. But perhaps it's because they haven't learned these skills.

Leaders must be politically aware. And we need to have students learn about political awareness. These high school kids suggest or the eighth grade


"Jeanne was a mentor long before mentors were in vogue. When analyzing a problem she often would say, 'What's the worst thing that can happen?' Then we could laugh and get on with the problem."
Sharon Clunk, one of ten teachers in the original GCUSD gifted program

group suggests or the fifth grade group is about to write a petition because the bus driver's been rude to them and they've been studying American history, so they know about petitions. As a teacher, you are the catalyst if you make them aware of the structure of power. Who can change the behavior of this bus driver? Have you talked to her? Do you have an obligation to do so?

"Who is the significant listener?" is one of those questions which leaders must ask. And if you believe that in every meeting you go to, that the principal of your school is the significant listener, the likelihood is that you may often be wrong. If the discussion is about P.E., there may be a particular teacher on that staff who has the greatest influence on that principal about P.E. And in that instance it is not the principal who is the significant listener, it's that teacher who has the influence on the principal. Who is the significant listener?

We need then, in organizational knowledge, people who know how to plan. Businesses and industry of successful levels often have a period of an hour's time set aside in the morning during which people will make decisions in their corporations—people who have the power to move that corporation into some new avenue. There are no telephone calls permitted. There are no interruptions permitted in their offices. And that is designated as the planning time. If only that could happen in education.

Leaders need to know the art of compromise. Rigidity of ideas will prevent the movement forward of an idea that you believe in. I will tell you—and I've not admitted this publicly too many times—that to a large degree when the definition of gifted was broadened to include talented and it came to be a part of our legislative considerations, I was not content. That would not have ever been my choice to have broadened that definition. And it was very uncomfortable for me to have to sit in Sacramento as I did many times with various legislators and help to design the legislation which broadened the definition. There were several other people there who felt the same way.

The reason that it had to be done was that if we didn't broaden the definition, we lost the program for gifted kids. Totally. And so compromise is necessary to leadership, and I think we need to teach children how to do that. "Is there some other way you could say what it is you want Michael to do?" "Is there some way you could figure out to solve this problem between the two of you so that Michael could have a little of what he wants and you get a little of what you want? That's called compromise. Can you do that?" Children who learn the vocabulary and have those opportunities set up for them are more likely to become effective leaders.

The third category is psychological knowledge. Leaders need to know how to build and recognize and develop support groups. Sometimes a person emerges as a subleader of a support group for the idea you're trying to promote, and you find that the person who has emerged as the leader of the subgroup is not the quality person that you would like to have in a leadership role. So we don't bring those people in. Leaders must recognize what a support group is and how you build it if you haven't got any. This program for gifted was saved in this state because this organization recognized about five years ago that we were going down the tubes very fast.

And if we didn't get parents throughout this state—not just Southern California, not just the San Francisco area—able and willing and committed to be support groups, we would not make this through the legislature. We would not be able to save gifted programs. And so this organization went out all over the state, into every nook and cranny you can imagine and there are areas now established that are parent regions. In every one of those regions there's a parent leader. And when the governor said he was going to veto AB1040 he began to get a thousand letters a day for a week. You want to ask me if I liked all the leaders of those small groups? No. You want to ask me if I think they said and treated all of us old professionals with respect? Absolutely not. But without those support groups we might have been in a different place today. And we need to teach people, students, how you develop support groups and how you work with them.

The most frequently neglected part of the curriculum or the training, I think, is psychological knowledge. Studies have been done to analyze what determines excellence in leadership, and one

***"Inclusive is always better than exclusive."***
*—Jeanne Delp*

of the things that you can take hope from is that there is no single effective personality that emerges as the proper personality for a leader to have. There are no absolutes that emerge out of that.

But there are, out of all of that research, qualities that emerge that contribute to excellence in leadership. Let me tell you some of those qualities. Remember what the high school student said? Leadership must be developed by adults. I think for every quality that I will name for you, there are concomitant actions and activities and interactions that adults can put into classrooms that will help develop these qualities.

**Commitment.** Think of J.P. Guilford. For forty-five years he's been working on intelligence with a few side trips into some other things. But he never gave that up.

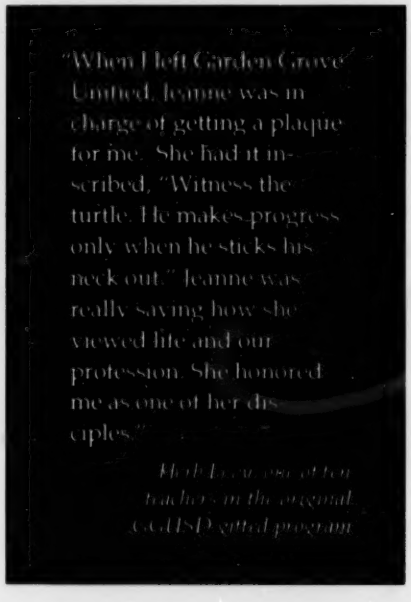
**Persistence.** There are people who don't take no for an answer. They're willing to continue regardless of the stumbling blocks that are put there. Regardless of the people who say, "Don't you get tired of this?" You've heard that all; a lot of you have. Jean Lamb has heard that many times, but then she goes on.

**Enthusiasm.** We need to teach enthusiasm. And if we don't model it, where on earth will they hear it or see it?

**Courage.** The courage of risk taking. A willingness to start. Gladstone said, "No man ever became great or good except through many and great mistakes." We need leaders who understand that. If you take a leadership position you will be criticized. You will be personally attacked. You will make mistakes. And we must help children understand that part of being a leader is the ability to accept personal attack and not take it personally. And that is tough to do. I'm still learning that. Some of you are still learning that. But if I had started at five instead of fifty, I might be better able to handle that now.

We need to teach children to have the courage to be angry. Strange. Anger may have been part of the motivation of Thomas Edison to develop the electric light bulb because he loved to read, and you can't read with crummy candlelight. Anger about cancer. Anger about heart disease may have been a motivator. There is nothing wrong with being angry about things as long as you learn to express that anger in ways that are constructive rather than destructive.

Every faculty has a nit picking


"When I left Garden Grove Unified, Jeanne was in charge of getting a plaque for me. She had it inscribed, "Witness the turtle. He makes progress only when he sticks his neck out." Jeanne was really saying how she viewed life and our profession. She honored me as one of her disciples."
Herb Lewis, one of the teachers in the original GGUSD gifted program

teacher on it who gets angry about the leaks in the ceiling, the ditto machine that doesn't work. And some of those people take that anger, and it becomes a positive force in that school. Others of them just stay nit pickers and gripe. And the teachers who interact with those other teachers or the administrator who interacts with that teacher could help that person to discover that it's courageous to be angry but to be angry in constructive ways is better.

**Faith.** Faith in themselves with the belief in an idea. Bob Richards, an Olympic pole vaulter of great skill and success, studied the success of hundreds of athletes in his era. And what he discovered at that time was that 90 percent of the world's greatest athletes were under 6 feet tall and weighed less than 185 pounds. It was not their brawn that made them great athletes. What he concluded was that it was their belief in their skill—their faith in their skill that urged them on to be successful.

One psychological knowledge we must develop in leaders and that we must be aware of before we can develop it, is that leaders are people who are creatively dissatisfied. The terminology that is most often applied to those people is troublemaker. Creatively dissatisfied has different parameters. They are people, generally kids, who have a constant desire to do or to make better. And they do it all the time. "Wouldn't it be better if..." they say about an assignment. "Wouldn't it be better if the principal did... instead of?" "Wouldn't it be better if the school board, et cetera, et cetera." And we sometimes label them as troublemakers.

If we would start to see these trouble makers as creatively dissatisfied with the status quo and help them recognize they were not troublemakers but that in their dissatisfaction they had some obligation to be creative in a positive way, then maybe we would have different kinds of leadership; and we would have greater and more solutions to some of the problems we face currently. Adlai Stevenson's quotation is one of my favorites. It hangs on the wall in my office, and I often read it before I have to deal with an angry parent or a disgruntled employee or my superintendent who's going to deal with me. This is the quote: "Criticism in

***"When in doubt, tell the truth."***
*—Jeanne Delp*

its most honest and fair form is the attempt to test whether what is, ought not be better." Wonderful quotation.

Objectivity is another psychological knowledge that leaders need. They need to see things realistically. They need to become the kind of people who are not easily deceived by others. Nor do they practice self-deception. They are sensitive to the subtleties of expressed emotions and needs. They are perceptive. They have unusual ability to detect the spurious and the fake and the dishonest in personality. They have the ability to judge people correctly and efficiently. They are people who don't take things personally. Now, the task is how you go about building into kids the ability to recognize the spurious and the fake and the dishonest in personality.

Other aspects of psychological knowledge are a sense of justice and integrity. Teach kids the words of integrity leaders must have. All of the studies about leadership show that. One must have integrity. Once you teach them that word, give examples of child-like instances or high school instances or middle grade instances. And then when you see a kid demonstrate integrity, a simple kind of thing, notice it. Some kid makes a statement in your room—makes a suggestion about something and you say to him, "Peter, that is a really good idea. Thank you for suggesting it." And Peter says to you, "John gave me that idea." He's just demonstrating integrity. But before he goes home you sit down with a piece of paper and you write a note to his parents and it says, "Today during a discussion, Peter said..." and you quote it exactly. "That was an act of integrity on Peter's part. I respect him for this." And the kid takes that note home with him and now what is he able to think? I am a person of integrity. You even said he was. People become what they're expected to be. And when we as adults can demonstrate for them that they are people of integrity, they will keep adding to that experience of integrity.

Then we have flexibility and self-discipline. If you haven't read Thomas Wolfe's book, *The Right Stuff*, about early test pilots and astronauts, do it. If you work for a former Marine it will help you understand your superintendent. You'll come to appreciate him far more. If you don't work for a former Marine but you work in an institution that is becoming militarized in some way because it's big, read that book because they talk about self-discipline and keeping cool. It's important to know about that as a leader.

What about decisiveness and people skills? Treat other people as if they had some value and surprisingly enough, two things will happen. Your own self-esteem will go up and so will the self-esteem of the people you work with. It takes time to establish confidence in one another and leaders who are real drivers sometimes forget that. They've given you five minutes to discuss an issue on an executive board or a board session and it is such an issue and people see all kinds of ramifications, it could really require twenty-five minutes. But the leader who is stuck to the schedule prevents those things from happening.

When you go home from here today or sometime this week, think to yourself, "If our goal in education were to destroy leadership ability among students' potential, what would we do? What rules would we make?" Now, if you think that's a wonderful idea and a twist, let me tell you, it's not mine. Jim Gallagher first shared that with me twenty-five years ago when he said, "Suppose you wanted to destroy creativity in education. What would you do?"

It's a powerful way of looking at this. What are the rules we'd make if our objective was to destroy leadership potential? And the point is that we can and should, I think, deliberately manipulate in the best sense of that word, the education in a direction that will produce leaders.

Finally, there is nothing more difficult to take in hand, nothing more perilous to conduct or more uncertain in its success, than to take the lead in the introduction of a new order of things.

I want to go back a few seconds here to the original definition. Please remember this: Leadership is stirring people so that they are moved from inside of themselves. It is stating goals that excite people and lift their sights. It's setting a personal example and putting enthusiasm into operation. It's communicating—both ways remember, talking and listening. It's rewarding merit and penalizing demerit honestly and fairly. It's one of the great weaknesses of education. We do not penalize demerit period. And we certainly don't often do it fairly and honestly. It is the right combination of these things so that people will do the work that makes an organization or idea successful and they will do it because they want to do it.

I salute you for your interest in education and leadership and the gifted. I value that interest and I value the fact that you will each go from this room with some new commitment to think differently about leadership. Thank you very much.

"I first met Jeanne Delp over thirty years ago. She made a presentation to a group of Garden Grove Elementary principals as our new Coordinator of Gifted Programs. She was so assertive, so articulate, so confident and so enthusiastic about providing the best for the gifted that many of us wondered if she was 'for real'. Over the next thirty some years, I discovered that this very talented, dynamic educator was very much 'for real'."

*Frank Nor, Former Associate Superintendent, GGUSD*

# Accepting the Ruth Martinson Award

*Jeanne Delp*

*One of the numerous awards Jeanne received was the Ruth Martinson Past President's Award, which was presented to her by the California Association for the Gifted on February 23, 1985 at our annual conference. Following are Jeanne's remarks on acceptance of the award.*

It is a superb honor for me to receive this award for many reasons, but especially because Ruth Martinson was my mentor. I learned much from her incisive questions, from her quiet wisdom and willingness to speak her mind. I disagreed with her. But we were always agreed on the importance of our commitment to the gifted.

I've spent thirty-four years working on behalf of the gifted. In thinking about this morning it occurred to me that some issues about the gifted have been put to rest during those thirty-four years and other issues have remained constants—as yet unresolved. I'd like to take a few minutes to share those awarenesses with you.

It seems to me that five issues have been put to rest during the past years.

1. Parents and educators have accepted their dual responsibility for the development of programs for the gifted. That was not always so. For some time those two groups viewed each other suspiciously and each guarded its ownership of the responsibility. Now there is a comfortable cooperation working.
2. Educators and parents have accepted the obligation of political advocacy on behalf of the gifted. Both groups have become proactive in the political arena recognizing the power in numbers and the absolute need for political visibility.
3. How a gifted program is organized is no longer the topic of heated debates which interfere with the implementation of a program. There was a time when we spent too much time arguing about how to group the students and hence did not get services offered to students as soon as they might have been.
4. Legislation authorizing gifted programs has been enacted in many states. There was a time when the major effort of parent associations was the push for any kind of legislation.
5. Associations for the gifted are in full blown operation in many states. The California Association for the Gifted has been a model for these states. This organization exists, is viable, grows in numbers and stature and has a significant impact on program development in this state. There was a time when this organization was impotent, argued about whether to include parents in its membership and dwindled in size and commitment. As the crises came, the commitment grew and was sustained by parents and educators who have made this an organization of great value.

Six issues have remained constant through the thirty-four years in my memory.

1. The identification methodology is still an issue which interferes with program growth. We will argue about intellectually gifted versus the talented; IQ versus other kinds of ability measures. We broadened the definition to include talented students. I wonder if in doing so, we haven't watered down the curriculum for the intellectually gifted and also diluted the appropriate, qualitative opportunities for the talented by including them in the programs previously designed for the intellectually gifted. I wonder too if that inclusion of talented into the gifted program hasn't been based on false assumptions:
   ***All** talented are intellectually gifted and **all** intellectually gifted are artistic or gifted in the visual and performing arts.*

   I look forward to the day when programs for the academically gifted and for the talented are *equally* outstanding and they have *equal* status.
2. The curriculum for the gifted is still an issue. To be sure we have identified principles of curriculum development appropriate to gifted, we can enumerate them glibly. Yet we have no *model* curriculum for gifted and talented.

   I look forward to the time when we have a

written down body of knowledge, skills and experiences which gifted ought to have that sets a standard of excellence in curriculum for gifted programs.

3. We still have no agreed upon standard of training for teachers of the gifted. I find it interesting that almost all other groups of students with special needs have special certification requirements. Witness the speech therapists credential, bilingual certification, special education credentials and now a new Speech and Language Development certificate. Terman delineated the special training requirements for teachers of the gifted in the 1940s. But we have no special certification required even though we can identify the skills that these teachers must have.

I look forward to the day when some great institution or some great organization establishes a center for the training of teachers of the gifted and from that evolves a certification process.

4. We still have no valid set of instruments for evaluation of gifted programs. Oh, we look at achievement tests; we do surveys and questionnaires; still we lack any new valid instruments.

I look forward to the time when we have ceased doing superficial evaluations of gifted programs and we willingly encourage a rigorous evaluation of academic achievement of attitudinal achievement, and of knowledge acquisition.

5. We still have not achieved an appropriate level of fiscal support in either the state or the nation.

I look forward to the day when such support is assured.

6. The quiet hostility toward the gifted abounds among the general public. We live with the continual reticence to recognize and acknowledge the need; and to support the right of the gifted to equal opportunity to develop their potential to the fullest. If you don't believe me, think of the media presentations you often see of the stereotyped precocious child. I remember a time when Ruth Martinson and I sat at her desert house and dreamed about the impact we could have if we could find the money, the talent, and the organization to sponsor, to "buy,"—if you will—a media campaign designed to build empathy among the public of the gifted student for whom we all have labored so long and so lovingly. How might such a campaign impact on national and state legislation? Is there now grant money available for such a noble undertaking?

I look forward to the time when such a campaign is funded and successfully implemented.

Then I ask myself, how is it that we've accomplished so much but still retain unresolved issues, particularly issues of such import?

I believe it is because we are very good at articulating and carrying out global goals. For example—to improve opportunities for the gifted, to provide enrichment experiences, to make school challenging for the gifted—are examples of noble global goals.

I believe what we need are specific short term goals. In 1955 when I was involved in one of the state's first summer seminars on the gifted, the twenty-six of us who had received $100 scholarships to attend, were charged with two very specific objectives at the conclusion of that six-week course: one, to write an article and get it published in some publicly circulated magazine; and two, to return to our district and get one thing started for the gifted.

We did that and thereby began some long term commitments to gifted education.

I look forward to the day when CAG has specific objectives in three areas:

1. An objective to mount a campaign to modify the public's perception of the gifted—to make it more positive— is in place and funded.
2. An objective which states that by June 1987 there will be a full scale institute for teacher training operating in this state where the theory, the instructional practices and the quality model curriculum for gifted is functioning successfully.
3. An objective as an organization which encourages and supports specific funding for higher education institutions where the research can be conducted which will help to resolve our unresolved issues.

Finally, let me say none of us has yet achieved his or her full potential. No organization has achieved its full potential. That is our challenge.

I look forward to the day when the successes of the past are but memorable harbingers of a noteworthy and proud future for gifted education.

My sincere thanks for this honor awarded to me and for the opportunity to share these thoughts with you.

"Ruth Martinson introduced Jeanne Delp to me in the 60s. We worked together to form the California Association for the Gifted and participated in conferences for the gifted. It was a pleasure to work with Jeanne as she was very well informed, an inspiration to teachers and administrators and completely dedicated to the gifted. She is sorely missed, but her legacy and spirit will go on and on and on."

*Jean Wiener, CAG founder*

# A Conversation with Jeanne Delp

*"I think it would be beneficial to education if we could remember what we are all in education for—to make things better for kids." In a candid interview for the Garden Grove Pupil Personnel Services Association Newsletter, Jeanne Delp, then Director of Categorical Programs for the GGUSD, expressed her thoughts concerning public education, her achievements as an educator, and her personal philosophy.*

**Q: You have pursued a long and varied career in education. How would you describe your own education as a child?**

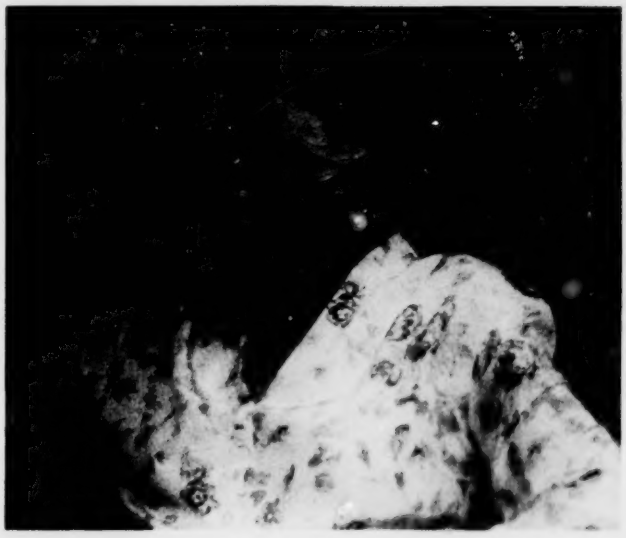
**A:** I was blessed with an education at a time when there were lots of innovations taking place and lots of creative projects happening. I went from grades one through twelve in the same school system, El Centro, California, except for three miserable months at Fairfax High School in Los Angeles when I was a sophomore. Going from a small school where I knew everyone, to a large school where I didn't know anyone, was a traumatic experience. I survived the experience mainly through the friendship of a counselor who did know me and took an interest in me. This experience also made me aware of the problems that moving causes for young people. We moved back to El Centro, however, and I finished school there.

**Q: Could you fill us in on your later educational credentials?**

**A:** I went to Stanford where I got my B.A. in English and psychology. Then I taught for a couple of years in Japan during the Korean War, which was an interesting experience. I returned to the San Diego area where I taught for a few years and, then, on to Sacramento to teach and work on my Master's degree in administration. At that time Sacramento State College was one of the few places in the state offering late afternoon and evening classes for Master's degree candidates.

**Q: What made you choose education as a career?**

**A:** It really wasn't my first choice. I intended to major in journalism at Stanford, However, the head of the department was absolutely opposed to women in journalism and put so many blocks in my path that I bought his message and turned to education. Now, as I look back, I'm always amazed that I gave up so easily. Education was my second choice. My mother had been a teacher.



**Q: If you could start all over, would you choose education as your career?**

**A:** That's an interesting question. In terms of long term rewards, I have enjoyed the time working with and for children. Today, however, the problems in education may outweigh the rewards. I have been very comfortable in education, though, and have appreciated the freedom to do what I wanted to do. In looking back, I really would have liked to have been a doctor—a pediatrician—or a journalist, but women were not encouraged to enter those professions when I was young. If times had permitted, I

probably would have chosen a different profession.

**Q: You've held many different positions in education. Could you list your various titles for us?**

**A:** I started out as a teacher, then became a county consultant in northern California where I supervised eight rural school districts. After that, I was a consultant with the California State Department of Education on the original study for gifted children. As a consequence of that study, I worked with the statewide advisory committee developing legislation for gifted children. For three years I worked as a consultant for the gifted program in Whittier.

In 1961, I came to Garden Grove where I organized the gifted program. I worked with that until 1974 when I became Director of Instruction. I found myself unable to see the effects of my job, however, in that position. I have always needed to see that I was having an impact on kids, actually, on people, in order to be content with my work. I then became principal of Carver Elementary School, where I learned how important it is for an administrator to have a commitment to counseling. My present position is Director of Categorical Programs, which includes School Improvement, Indian education, the Gifted and Talented Program, Title I, Preschool education, and Title 4B programs.

**Q: How did you like being a principal?**

**A:** I liked the time spent counseling with kids and their parents. But I found out something interesting about myself when I became a principal. In all of my previous positions in this school district, I had been a central office employee. As principal, I felt alienated from the District. I found I preferred being in a central office position where my skills might have a wider impact. I feel, however, that people in the central office should have the experience of being an on-site administrator. It certainly made me more aware of the pressures put on schools, and I have greater respect for administrators. It was also good for me to find out that kids and parents are different today.

**Q: Which of all your positions has been the most satisfying to you?**

**A:** For me, the most challenging position I ever had was being the coordinator of the gifted program. To have the opportunity to begin a new program. To plan totally the implementation and to see the program grow in stature was truly a rewarding experience. I have, however, always enjoyed my work.

**Q: What drew you toward working with gifted children and organizing programs for them?**

**A:** In a way, it was just a chance circumstance. In 1955 when I was teaching, the PTA offered some $100 scholarships to work on a program for the gifted and talented. I was one of twenty-five people who went to San Francisco and worked with a brilliant woman who gave us two tasks to do when we returned to our schools. One was to start some effort on behalf of gifted students, and the second was to publish an article on our work. I did both. I think, however, that a lot of what I know about the gifted has been intuitive with me. I have always felt an affinity for gifted kids. As a kid I did well in school, but always bucked the establishment.

**Q: Has being a woman in educational administration ever caused any special problems for you?**

**A:** One problem I have encountered is the labeling of a woman as "hard" or "a tough broad" if she says things that are straight forward and candid, or if she makes decisions, required by her position, which are unpopular. A man, in those settings, gets labeled as "strong." Since I don't think of myself as "hard," I've not enjoyed being thought of as "a tough broad." But I have learned to live with it without rancor.

**Q: Do you consider yourself a feminist?**

**A:** I believe in equal rights and opportunities and decision-making powers. But, frankly, I still prefer men to open doors and to display the traditional amenities toward women.

**Q: Whenever your name is mentioned, someone will usually say, "Oh, I was in**

**a workshop she conducted and really got a lot out of it." What kind of skills do you feel are needed in running a successful workshop?**

**A:** I think the main workshop skills are:

To believe in what you are presenting.

To have done the activity yourself.

To remember that children learn in pieces—so data needs to be presented in increments.

To be well organized and carefully plan the workshop.

To use the words you would want teachers to use with their students in presenting the material—so that a model is presented.

To remember that you teach kids in a classroom of thirty or so.

To make your objective *practicality.*

When I first went into supervision, I promised myself that I would remember that teachers work hard enough without calling them to a workshop where they get nothing out of it. I love seeing teachers try new things and succeed.

**Q: Everyone—from newspaper reporters to TV commentators to the individual on the street—has his/her own theory about what is wrong with public education today. Do you think we have failed?**

**A:** I think our whole society has caused whatever erosion there has been in education. It has always been a reflection of society. Maybe this has been our mistake. Instead of saying what we are going to do, we have taken our direction from the general public. We've never taken a strong stand and said, "Our expertise says this is the way to do it." We have not had a consistently clear direction of what or how we ought to teach.

I also think that society has become more hedonistic and has less respect for education. There is little respect for educators, and this has had an impact on kids. As an administrator, I had to learn that when a parent became abusive, I simply had to say, "I will not tolerate verbal abuse from you," and somehow the parent changed his tune. I wish all educators were trained in the skill of confrontation. It would be far better for us if we had the courage to confront the people who wrongfully criticize us.

**Q: Do you think we have any successes that we should feel good about and, perhaps, receive more recognition for them?**

**A:** I think verbal communication skills of our society are better because of schools. Extracurricular activities have given students opportunities for leadership. Expanded programs for all kids have given them a much wider spectrum of choices.

**Q: This is a newsletter for counselors, psychologists, and speech therapists. Do you have any thoughts on their roles in the educational process?**

**A:** If counseling in schools went beyond scheduling kids in and out of classes, and really focused on counseling, it would have an impact on students. For whatever reasons, counselors, psychologists, and speech therapists are misused. I have heard all three criticized for not being useful and valuable. I think it's the way we have used them that is not effective.

I also feel that if we had the money, one of the greatest contributions we could make to the kids would be to have elementary counselors.

**Q: You've certainly had a lot of success in your career. What plans do you have for the future?**

**A:** I'm going to take a look at the paralegal profession as a second career. I'm also interested in the process of negotiations and conflict resolution. I have no plans to leave my job now, but I'm certainly not going to sit home and twiddle my thumbs when I retire. There are lots of exciting things to do.

**Q: It's interesting to know what people like to do outside of work. What are some of your personal interests?**

**A:** I love the theater and have been particularly interested in seeing the growth of the Gem Theater in Garden Grove. I like camping, fishing, and I'm also a pretty good shot.

I really love teaching so I always do some in the summer. This summer I'll be teaching workshops in Texas and in Hawaii.

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# COMMUNICATOR

# LANGUAGE ARTS

## Literature in the Multicultural Classroom

by LINDA BRUG

*We have been so preoccupied with trying to find out how to teach everybody to read anything that we have forgotten the importance of what is read. Yet it is obvious that if we succeeded in teaching everybody to read, and everybody read nothing but pulp magazines, obscene literature and Mein Kampf, the last state of the nation would be worse than the first. Literacy is not enough.*
*—Robert M. Hutchins*

As Robert Hutchins suggests in the quotation above, not all pieces of literature are equally successful in promoting aesthetic and intellectual growth, developing a sense of citizenship, building a sense of rootedness and developing ethical responsibility in students.

*Caught in the Middle* states that, "Young adolescents have a natural curiosity about the world in which they live. They must have multiple exciting opportunities to explore this world through exposure to ideas, experiences and traditions. Their instructional materials and classroom experiences should expose them to many of the enduring literary classics—especially those which have themes capable of exciting and challenging youthful imaginations."

What *should* they be reading? If you teach reading, language arts or English in the middle school, you have asked yourself this question countless times. If your classroom is like mine you see more R.L. Stine being read than John Steinbeck and you think, well, at least they're reading. How, though, do we get them to read quality, meaningful literature?

Today's students are very lucky. There is more quality literature for them to choose from than ever before. Many of the best authors are writing for children, and yet students need greater motivation than ever to read.

Teachers and parents must make reading a priority. My GATE class and regular classes of language arts and U.S. history are made up of about 35-40% minority (mostly Hispanic) students with many levels of reading skills. I am lucky to have these students for two years, since we mix seventh and eighth graders together to create a stronger connection between the student and the teacher. During these two years I make reading an important part of the curriculum in both subjects.

I agree with the *Handbook for Planning an Effective Literature Program* published by the California State Department of Education, that a quality literature program has three important components: a core program, extended program and a recreational-motivational reading program.

The whole idea of a core list of books is to select literary works that will attract all students' interests and which will help students to see the connection between the literature and their own lives. The core program should include excellent works of literature from different genres, and because of the diversity of our student population, it is important to include excellent writing reflecting many cultures. Many of our classrooms reflect the many cultures in our society, and I believe it is important for our students to discover that all cultures

*Continued on page 28*

# PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

## Perspectives on Language Arts for Gifted Students: Yesterday and Today

**by SANDRA KAPLAN**

Years ago, it was the language arts program that introduced me to the abilities of gifted students. It was the language arts program that uncovered and displayed to me the giftedness I only previously had read about in a text describing exceptional children. It was the language arts program that defined the gifted readers by their speed and comprehension and the gifted writers by their creativity. Today, it is the language arts program that in many classroom is inhibiting or discouraging giftedness. Whole language and the writing process as components of a language arts program are not to be blamed for some of today's concerns about language arts and gifted students. However, the translation of these concepts into classroom practices is causing these concerns.

- "Read around" groups, where each member of the group takes a turn to read aloud a designated portion of the reading selection can be detrimental to gifted students. These students are preparing mentally to attend to only their section of the reading material and then tuning out, so to speak. Since many gifted students read fast and enjoy the mental stimulus and interaction when they become a silent partner in the reading process, reading aloud a single portion of a literary work is not intellectually satisfying to them.
- The writing process has been helpful to every young writer. In some cases, gifted students have not been helped to apply the stages and skills of the writing process. They have become dependent on another's response to their writing rather than taking more personal responsibility for editing, for example, their own writing. The writing process must be internalized by gifted students (all students) so it can be performed independently and individually and the self ultimately must become one's primary editor and reviewer.
- The focus on English language acquisition cannot be limited to bilingual or LEP students. Gifted students whose primary language is English need continual experiences that help them gain new vocabulary and utilize extensively the vocabulary they already have developed.
- The emphasis on core literature in classrooms cannot satisfy gifted students' needs to be introduced to and have experiences with the classics. A single core literary work must be extended so that gifted students are reading "collections of literature." Each core literature book should be a catalyst to introduce students to related literature. The one-book-at-a-time reading concept is insufficient to develop sophisticated gifted readers.
- The places for inventive versus formal spelling need to be clarified for gifted students. The practice of inventive spelling cannot be demeaned for gifted students and conversely the overemphasis on formal spelling cannot be perceived solely as the avenue to academic writing and good spellers.
- The benefits from using journals cannot be refuted. However, the overuse of journal writing can be abusive. Many gifted students have trivialized the journal writing process when it is related to "on demand" emotive writing that is expected to culminate every lesson or each day. "Tell us how you feel" relegates journal writing for gifted students to a task rather than an expression of self or the outcome of lessons. Learning about the personal value and historical significance of journals must accompany the task of maintaining a journal.

A language arts program for gifted students should consider developing an appreciation of language. This includes learning about the existence and usage of language for different purposes. Gifted students should be assisted to become aware of the origin and evolution of different forms of language and the factors in a society which promote or retard their use. The first is the language of learning.

### 1. Language of Learning

This refers to the language of scholars and the language that precipitates scholarliness. Examples of this language include:

- "The accumulated evidence indicates that _____"
- "Another point of view might be _____"
- "The assumption proposed appears to be

that_____"

- "The issue germane or central to the point seems to be_____"

**2. Language and Decision Making**

This refers to the nomenclature used to process the variables which aid decision making. These language patterns can be gleaned from the dialogues of fictional characters in decision-making situations. They also can be acquired from an analysis of the lives of famous people expressed in autobiographies and biographies. Importantly, the language of decision making is also to be noted in the essays and other deliberations of individuals in crisis or conflict. This language includes phrases such as:

- weighing the consequences
- prioritizing data
- assigning value to
- assessing the alternatives
- pondering

**3. Language of Leadership**

This refers to the selection of words and style of syntax that serve to influence people. Inherent in the development of this type of language is an understanding of intellectual as well as social leadership behaviors and skills. Listening to and reading from the speeches and debates of historic and contemporary leaders can be the bases for the acquisition of this type of language.

**4. Personalized Language**

This refers to the language that reflects personal interests and is a tool to be used to attain individual intellectual power. This language provides the student with the language to specialize. It includes the technical vocabulary of the student's interests or "passion."

Today's language arts program should be the showcase for the performance of the gifted student's interests and intellectual behaviors. Today's language arts program should not submerge individual abilities and needs, but should cater to the differentiated needs of all learners. Today's language arts program should retain the best of what was valued in yesterday's language arts program for gifted students.


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# CALENDAR

April 8–9, 1994
**Teacher Institute**, Concord, CA
Two-day institute at Sheraton Concord Hotel on Differentiating the Curriculum for Gifted Students. Prices start at $110.
For information, contact the CAG office, 415/965-0653.

April 9, 1994
**Sixth Annual Gifted/Talented Black Child Conference**
Dublin Avenue Magnet School, Los Angeles, CA
Workshops on supportive parenting and successful teaching strategies for the gifted black child.
For information, contact the LAUSD GATE office, 213/625-6500 or the Central Cities Gifted Children's Association office, 213/750-6559.

April 13, 1994
**The Best of CAG Conference**
Santa Clara County Office of Education, 100 Skyport Drive, MC 237, San Jose, CA 3:30 P.M. to 7:00 P.M.
Participants at CAG's 32nd annual conference in Palm Springs share innovative ideas and creative concepts for parents and educators.
For information, contact Kathy Oda Hope or Theresa Martinez, 408/453-6804.

April 16, 1994
**Teacher Institute**, Redding, CA
One-day institute at Simpson College on Differentiating the Curriculum for Gifted Students. Cost is $65.
For information, contact the CAG office, 415/965-0653.

April 22–23, 1994
**Teacher Institute**, San Diego, CA
Two-day institute at San Diego Princess Hotel on Differentiating the Curriculum for Gifted Students. Cost is $105.
For information, contact the CAG office, 415/965-0653.

May 14, 1994
**Teacher Institute**, Los Angeles, CA
One-day institute at Century Plaza Hotel on Differentiating the Curriculum for Gifted Students. Cost is $65.
For information, contact the CAG office, 415/965-0653.

May 15, 1994 - Deadline
**Summer Seminar for High School Students, "California in the 21st Century"**
Deadline for students entering 10th or 11th grade in September to apply for CAG's summer seminar, July 10–22, 1994, at Westmont College in Montecito. For a copy of the brochure/application, contact the CAG office, 415/965-0653. For details on the seminar, contact Ann Cierley, 805/871-8950.

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# It's OK To Read It in a Book

**by JEAN DRUM, Editor**

We Americans are pleased that we have a high degree of literacy in our country, and at the same time we feel a sense of embarrassment and concern that some of the other industrialized nations show a greater percentage of literate citizens than we do. Both the public in general and educators in particular are giving a great deal of thought to how we teach reading in our schools. With "one hundred percent literacy by the year 2000" as one of the national education goals, educators are putting a dizzying amount of effort into research on how to teach everyone to read.

An odd note creeps into the classroom at this point however. At the same time that we are teaching, talking, arguing, experimenting and trying everything to improve reading ability, we are downplaying the role that reading plays in the learning of every subject, except, of course, reading. Manipulatives, rather than explanation, are the thing in math. Science textbooks are put on the back burner and "hands-on" is said to be the way to get scientific concepts across to kids. When they really find it out for themselves, we say, then they'll understand it. History books are to be used as a resource only, and teachers are urged to have kids do projects in which they get personally involved in history—plays, videos, making board games. We decry the influence of TV and video games on our students, but we welcome laser disks and interactive computer games to teach both history and science. And wait, even in the teaching of reading itself, listening to text being read aloud, either by the teacher or another student in a cooperative learning group, is becoming more common.

Are educators being double minded about the value of reading—talking a lot about how great it is and then not really using it? Yes and no. Reading itself is a sedentary and solitary activity, and children are usually neither of those things, at least for very long periods of time. It has always been obvious that active, participatory lessons are vital to good learning in any subject and at any age, up to and including senior citizens. Making history come alive, the "you are there" approach is exciting and wonderful and important. Really "doing" science is fun and valuable and allows students to internalize the concepts they need to learn. These are all outstanding ways to convey information, but way back at the beginning, the quickest, most efficient way to get a lot of information is to read it in a book. That's the whole point of wanting to be a literate society. It is a literate society which can preserve its past and pass on information, so that the next generation doesn't have to reinvent the wheel. Any individual, anywhere, can get a book and learn about…whatever. We can do it at our own speed and tuck it into our own schedule, and without using any special equipment. Could anything be easier? Or cheaper?

So this is a plea to remember the lowly book. Before students can put on news broadcasts about Washington's troops at Valley Forge, set up an experiment on how plants react to light or any of the other great activities we see in classrooms, they have to have information, and the easiest place to get it is from the book. They can't meet George Washington, but in a book, they can read what Washington said, what Jefferson thought about what Washington said, what Lincoln said about what Jefferson thought about what Washington said. Where else could you learn all that so quickly? Quickly is an important word here too. The modern world is incredibly complicated, filled with more information than any of us can absorb in a lifetime, and we need to learn what we need without wasting time. Books can do that for us.

Learning is a lifetime occupation, and educators stress that learning does not stop at the end of a person's formal school career. How does a person learn something if he's, say 45 years old and no longer a full-time student? Need I say? Books are one of the most vital commodities of our culture, and students should learn from their earliest experiences that books are their key to a lifetime of learning.

This by no means suggests that classrooms turn into library reading rooms where students sit in their seats all day and read. Current educational practices which expect children to demonstrate their knowledge by presenting a project are superb learning experiences for both presenters and audience. Present day technology has given us a myriad of new possibilities in the classroom, and schools are livelier, more active places than they have ever been. Teachers and students alike are enriched by this approach and we want to expand and improve it. But at the same time, the importance of the book must not be forgotten. Children must have good textbooks, filled with words, pictures, maps, diagrams and other good things to help them comprehend. These textbooks must inform them, challenge their thinking and excite their imagination. And, of course, we must teach them to read these books, read them easily and with confidence and pleasure. We must not give up, "dumb down," and teach American history by means of a video game or limit science to what can be done hands-on. That's not enough for us. Let's read, read it all; then we'll know how to put on a Gold Rush breakfast, make a riffle box and pan for gold at the American history fair.

# Update from Sacramento

by CATHY BARKETT

The California Learning Assessment System (CLAS) has come to our public schools in California. For the first time ever, our students are being measured against rigorous statewide standards.

They must show that they have mastered (acquired) important basic academic skills and techniques and know how to use them—that they have the knowledge and thinking skills so critical for adult success.

CLAS reports student results according to statewide levels of performance. These levels challenge students and teachers alike to reach for ever-higher levels of achievement.

**What is CLAS?**

The new CLAS is mandated by law and is designed to satisfy four important needs. It will:

- Provide individual results based on statewide levels of performance.
- Report the results of these assessments in terms of clearly defined statewide standards of performance.
- Challenge students to demonstrate their thinking skills, to analyze, to solve problems and to explain their solutions in writing.
- Serve as a catalyst for improving classroom instruction.

**What are the components of CLAS?**

When fully implemented, CLAS will have two major components. The first are annual assessments in reading, writing and mathematics at grades 4, 8 and 10; and in history-social science and science at grades 5, 8 and 10. Reading, writing and mathematics assessments were introduced in 1993. Science and history-social science assessments are scheduled to begin at grade 5 in 1994, with grades 8 and 10 to follow. CLAS assessments in Spanish for grade 4 are currently being developed and will be field-tested this year.

The second component will be a portfolio type of assessment for the same grades and subjects. This part of CLAS, when developed, will feature a collection of selected student work, prepared in the course of normal class activities and will include a variety of projects. It will provide a snapshot of the quality and depth of a student's work, expanding on the information gathered through the annual assessments.

**How was CLAS developed?**

It takes a lot of people working together to design and put into place an assessment system for a state the size of California. The new state assessments are developed by teams of elementary and secondary teachers, curriculum specialists, administrators, testing experts, university professors and representatives from California's subject matter projects. Hundreds of teachers and students try out the test items in special field tests, and special reviews are conducted to ensure that CLAS assessments are fair and sensitive to cultural, language and gender differences.

**How are CLAS assessments scored?**

The 1993 assessments were scored by more than 2,000 California classroom teachers, coordinated by the CDE and regional staff consortia, with assistance from independent testing contractors.

To ensure that CLAS results were reliable:

- Experienced teachers were selected to score the student work.
- Scoring guides were produced and tested by the subject area development teams to ensure accuracy.
- Teachers were specially trained to use the scoring guides. They were allowed to begin scoring only after they demonstrated an accurate and consistent application of the state scoring guides.
- Scored papers were monitored with checks and double checks to make sure the scorers stayed on target. A technical advisory committee of national testing experts oversaw the process.

Coordinators of the first round of statewide scoring reported that teachers' scoring was highly consistent, verifying the quality of the system and the training provided.

**What are CLAS standards?**

Performance standards offer educators and parents all over California the same criteria for measuring the quality of student work. Business leaders, parents, educators, testing experts, school board members and state officials—rep-

resenting backgrounds as diverse as California itself—worked together to write descriptions for the first set of statewide performance standards.

**What's planned for CLAS in 1994?**

- In the spring of 1994, the Department of Education will assess all students in grades 4, 8 and 10 in reading, writing and mathematics. All students will also be assessed in history-social science at grade 5.
- Reports for grades 4, 8 and 10 in reading, writing and mathematics will include school, district and state-level results.
- For the first time, the 1994 CLAS reports for grades 4 and 8 will include individual student results in reading, writing and mathematics for students, their parents and their teachers.
- Teams of bilingual teachers are working on language arts and mathematics assessments in Spanish for grade 4. Schools will be invited to participate in the field tests when the assessments are developed.
- CLAS will also be piloting assessments for students with special needs.

1994 Golden State Examinations will be administered in first-year algebra, geometry, biology, chemistry, U.S. history and economics. There will be open-ended problems in all subjects tested and lab work and portfolios in science. The GSE will continue to provide high honors and honors certificates and insignias on diplomas for the top levels of achievement.

# "A Challenging Program for Every Student in Every School"

**A Conversation with: Cathy Barkett, Director for Gifted and Talented Education**
**California State Department of Education**

*Cathy Barkett is no stranger to Sacramento. She is a native Californian, born in Oakland and raised mostly in the Bay Area, with time out on a farm in Idaho and a stay in Canada where she went to kindergarten and first grade and felt that Canadian schools demand more of their students than do schools here. She went to UCLA (because UC Berkeley was too close to home) and spent her junior year in Italy at the University of Padua ("where Copernicus studied, some 2 one he[one me"). She has travelled extensively in Europe, speaks Spanish and Italian and has begun the study of Chinese. Her husband, Joe Barkett, is the chief financial officer for A World of Good Taste, which operates a local chain of restaurants, LaBon bakeries, and a coffee company. The Barketts have "two terrific kids" aged 11 and 8 who attend school in the San Juan School District. In her spare time she likes to play bridge, ski, read, coach soccer, cook and garden.*

**Q: How did you become interested in gifted education?**

**A:** I have always been interested in individualizing education to meet the needs of students. While pursuing a Master's in Education at UCLA, I became interested in the education of exceptional children, including those who are gifted and talented. But it was my oldest son, Andy, who "encouraged" me to get involved in the education of the gifted when he became bored in school, in spite of the fact that he was enrolled in what I consider to be an excellent public elementary school. In an effort to support and extend the school program, I began teaching special classes for gifted students before and after school, while working half-time for the California Department of Education. I also became chairperson of the school's Advisory Committee for Gifted and Talented Education, organized several teams for the Odyssey of the Mind Competition, and coordinated the school's "Hands-On Science" program. In spite of my efforts to enrich his program, by the end of fourth grade my son was ready for a full-time accelerated program, so we enrolled him in a special day class magnet program for gifted students. Through these personal experiences, I became interested professionally in finding a position in the Department


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where I could make a contribution through assisting schools to develop high-quality programs and services for students for whom the standard curriculum is not sufficient. In May of 1993, when Barbara Brandes, the former director of the Gifted and Talented Program, was asked to devote her energy full-time to the implementation of *Second to None*, I requested her former assignment as GATE Director.

**Q: How has your background helped you?**

**A:** I have a Master's in Education Administration from UCLA and a lot of experience teaching and conducting research with special populations. For example, I was an assistant teacher for an exceptional children's preschool, a mental health consultant for Urban League Head Start in the Los Angeles area, and I worked for Systems Development Corporation on an evaluation of education programs for neglected and delinquent children. Working as a student intern under a clinical psychologist, I tested hundreds of children using a full battery of intelligence and personality tests and participated in the development of IEPs for those children. I mention that because I think I have a good understanding of what tests can and can't measure, and of the fallibility of making judgements about children from a single testing session. I was a bilingual aide in a kindergarten classroom for a year—I think they hired me because I speak Spanish on the kindergarten level! That was a valuable experience because I began to learn how to recognize signs of giftedness in children who did not speak English. My year in Padua also helped me develop firsthand knowledge of the problems of second language acquisition.

**Q: What are the most important issues facing education?**

**A:** I think the biggest obstacle facing gifted education today is the perception of some educators and parents that unless we teach the same thing to every child at the same time, we are somehow denying access to some children. I don't agree with this philosophy. I think the rights of every child are the same: the right to a challenging education that teaches each child to be the best that he or she can be in every area of the curriculum and the right to continued support and assistance to achieve the highest levels of performance. However, children don't all come to us with the same interests, experiences or readiness. You can't take a gifted child who speaks no English, plunk her down into an accelerated literature class with no support, and expect her to succeed. You can't take a child who comes to school in the morning without breakfast day after day, and expect him to concentrate on his studies all morning. You can't take a student who has not yet learned how to multiply whole numbers and expect her to multiply fractions. And you can't take a student who has never played an instrument and put him in advanced band! I believe that almost all children are capable of reaching advanced levels of understanding, but only if we take into account what they already know, what they still need to learn, and then help them devise a plan for further learning. I am opposed to tracking our underachieving students, because I think there is good evidence that most low achieving students learn more when grouped heterogeneously, and because I think that in the past many children were relegated to low "tracks" based on limited and inaccurate information. However, I think you can be opposed to tracking at the lower achievement levels and still support providing advanced learning opportunities for gifted and talented students.

This issue faces all of education: are we going to offer a standard curriculum to all students, without regard to individual differences, or are we going to provide a challenging curriculum for all students and individualize instruction so that students who need additional support will receive it, and students who can demonstrate mastery of an area of the curriculum will be encouraged to move ahead?

**Q: How do you like working in Sacramento?**

**A:** It is fascinating to watch how law and policy are made. I have found that most people agree on the goals: a great public education that turns out well-informed citizens who can compete with students all over the world in all subjects; a zero dropout rate and graduates who go on enthusiastically either to higher education

or a productive and interesting job; and students who are committed to lifelong learning, who are well-rounded and healthy physically and emotionally. Most people involved in government, whether in the legislature, CDE, Governor's office or other state agencies, are trying to develop policy and support programs designed to achieve those goals. We differ, however, in our thinking about *how* to reach those goals, and our differences lead to fragmentation in the educational system at every level from the legislature to the classroom.

**Q: What is your conception of the ideal gifted program?**

**A:** I have seen some programs in California that border on the ideal. They have certain characteristics in common: a focus on what the child learns; acceptance of individual differences in children; encouragement to students to delve into those aspects of a rich curriculum that particularly interests them and to progress at a pace that is challenging to them; promotion of intrinsic rather than extrinsic motivation to learn; teaching students to celebrate each other's achievements; encouragement of students to develop a realistic self-appraisal at the same time they are striving to further their knowledge and skills in all areas; and a knowledgeable teacher who is excited about learning, likes children, and communicates her enthusiasm to them.

**Q: What contribution would you most like to make to gifted education?**

**A:** I wish there was a simple answer to this question, like "I would like to reduce wasted talent by 25%!" As a career bureaucrat, I realize that the contributions we make at the state level are not easy to measure, and that the most important contributions are made by parents and by teachers in the classroom as they touch the lives of individual children and help those children find joy in learning. I would like to make it easier for all classroom teachers to recognize unique gifts and talents in their students and to feel comfortable helping those students develop those gifts. I hope I can do that by helping to set a state policy that encourages each child to excel, working with CAG to develop teacher training programs, and assisting school districts to develop or improve their GATE programs.

Funding is and will continue to be a problem. Funding in districts with more than 50 identified students translates to less than $100 per year, and this includes only a little more than half of the state's school districts. This means that gifted programs must search for options that don't cost additional money. A special day class for gifted students generates revenue based on ADA, and that can fund the teacher and materials and supplies. Some schools are differentiating the curriculum and instruction within the regular classroom. This is not an expensive option, but it does require a dedicated teacher, funds for staff development, and some enrichment and above grade level materials.

*A GATE director's wish list!*

I would like to see the education reform agenda focus more on student achievement and the encouragement of students to continue to strive to achieve at the highest possible levels. As we try to reform or restructure schools we should measure our success in terms of improved student performance.

I would like to see us improve our systems for identification of gifted and talented students so that we increase our identification and support of giftedness in underrepresented ethnic groups, and thus continue to add students to the high-achieving groups at every year of schooling.

I would like to have a challenging program at the elementary, middle and secondary grades for every student in every school in California. We should not aim for any goal short of this one, and we should be united in working together to meet this goal.

# Educational Reform, Values, and Gifted Students

by JAMES J. GALLAGHER

*This article first appeared in* Gifted Child Quarterly, *Vol. 35, No. 1, Winter 1991. Its relevance is vital to understanding the relationship between gifted education and educational reform.*

Those educators who work with gifted students often feel apart from, not a part of, the regular school system. Some of our educational colleagues seem to see us that way too. But we have played a more significant role in the general education scene than many imagine. Who, for example, has led the way in the development of critical and creative thinking (Feldhusen and Treffinger, 1985)? Who has identified and intervened with the underachiever (Whitmore, 1980)? Who has pioneered in looking at the need for content sophistication in curriculum (Maker, 1982)? Where did the concept of flexible pacing come from? In many instances the education of gifted children has played the role of pilot study to significant improvement in the regular education program.

Still, we are a relatively small group and, hence, are influenced by the larger movements that strike the American educational scene. For example, Sputnik changed programs for the education of the gifted more than the 25 years of internal wrangling among educators of gifted by stimulating needed curriculum reform.

Now we are facing a new era of educational reform that promises to change significant aspects of the American educational experience and, like a large wave, carry us in the education of gifted students along with it. Here are six reforms, none of which were proposed with the gifted student in mind, but each of which can be a major force influencing the education of gifted children: (a) the excellence movement, (b) cooperative learning, (c) middle schools, (d) certification of master teachers, (e) site-based management, and (f) accountability.

Each of them has the promise of bringing a more exciting educational system and a stronger program for gifted and for all students. Each also has the potential for placing a serious barrier in the path of educating gifted children, and we need to be particularly alert to such barriers.

### Values and Education of Gifted Students

It seems clear that personal and social values play a significant role in determining how we approach the special education of gifted students. It has been accepted for some time that the United States has had a commitment to two values that may sometimes conflict with one another—*excellence* and *equity*. John Gardner (1961) once wrote a book subtitled *Can We Be Equal and Excellent, Too?* and suggested that we could do both but that we weren't doing too well at that time. The need for special education for the gifted child is often supported by those who champion the value of *excellence*, but there are many persons who believe deeply that equity should be our guiding principle in American education. The actual application of these values to educational decision making leaves much to be desired. The ambivalence of the American society toward the goals of educational equity and educational excellence are clearly seen in the proposed national goals accepted by the 50 governors.

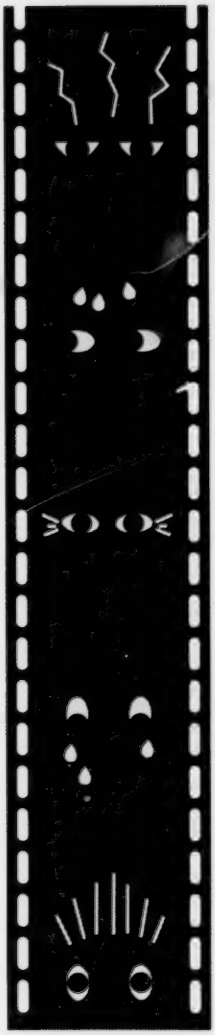
**National Education Goals**

1. By the year 2000, all children in America will start school ready to learn.
2. By the year 2000, we will increase the percentage of students graduating from high school to at least 90%.
3. By the year 2000, American students will leave grades four, eight, and twelve having demonstrated competency over challenging subject matter, including English, mathematics, science, history, and geography.
4. By the year 2000, U.S. students will be first in the world in science and mathematics achievement.
5. By the year 2000, every adult American will be literate and possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.
6. By the year 2000, every school in America will be free of drugs and violence and offer a disciplined environment conducive to learning.

*Governors' Task Force on Education*
Charlottesville, VA
Fall, 1989

*continued on page 29*

# Storytelling, Developing the Movie Screen of the Mind by DALE BULLA



The power of visualization is no longer in question. One need only look back at the Olympic games and remember the athletes describing how they would go through their routines in their "mind's eye" and see themselves being successful in an event. The mind cannot distinguish between imagining an event and actually doing it. An example of this occurs during a movie. At a particular moment of emotion or fear, one may experience rapid heartbeat, quickening of respiration or even sweating. The body is reacting as if a real situation were occurring even though the event is happening only in the brain. If the mind believes that the experience is actually taking place then appropriate messages are sent to the body.

Athletes have recognized this power of mental imagery for some time and they have used it to increase their odds of success in competition. Educators and parents are also starting to realize the value of this often neglected yet natural human ability.

Storytelling is one of the most powerful ways of enhancing the technique of visualization and it is free. The electronic age has caused many people to feel that "high tech" images can take the place of "old fashioned" mental skills, yet the ability to visualize is as important now as ever, perhaps even more. From the boardroom to the classroom, the value of generating creative ideas is returning. The act of sharing these ideas through imagery can stimulate the imagination to invent, to solve problems and to pose hypothetical situations.

Without the ability to visualize, reading and writing are just groups of letters printed on a page instead of wide-screen mental movies. If a child has not developed the ability to see mental images, then reading may be simply the act of saying words that are seen written on a page. Imagine how boring reading would be if all the reader saw were these words with none of the mental pictures. Could this be a reason that some children don't like to read?

The same is true of writing. If the mind doesn't create images, how can the description be written? It is no wonder a child questions, "What shall I write? How should I describe it? What does it look like?" If a child is asking these questions, perhaps the visualization process has not been fully developed. The fault may not lie with the child if he or she has been "raised" on video and movies. With these media, nothing is really left to the imagination of the observer. Passive attention is all that is required here, not active mental imagery.

After reading a story about a monster, how often does a child ask to see a picture of the creature? Sometimes he or she is unsure of a mental image and wishes to know if it is correct. The child may have been conditioned to think that someone else's pictures are better. Yet if allowed to develop, the child's mental images may be far better and just as exciting as any illustrator's work.

When a person listens intently to a story, nothing can visually distract the mind from creating an image. The listener sees the images as the story progresses and is no longer just a listener but an active participant in the unfolding of the story.

Sometimes when a familiar picture book is read, the listener will correct the reader if the tale is not accurately recited. Just try skipping a page of a favorite storybook and the omission will be noticed immediately. Yet when a story is told rather than read, the listener is more willing to accept variations in detail. Often he or she can't wait to see what changes the storyteller might include this time. Before long, the listener will be helping fill in the details.

The next logical step will be for the listener to become a storyteller. Making up stories or writing books may soon follow. Watch the improvement in reading and creative writing and see how rich descriptions become. Once the art of visualization is mastered, the mental images of the young storyteller will have undergone a renaissance that can challenge any of Steven Spielberg's special effects!

**Dale Bulla is a teacher turned professional storyteller. He can be reached at 1205 Wiltshire Dr., Carrollton, TX 75007-4810.**

# A British Kid's Reading List

*Courtesy of the* Advocate *from the Connecticut Association for the Gifted comes this list of recommended books for schoolchildren in Great Britain as suggested in the new national curriculum guidelines in Great Britain.*

**Ages Five to Seven**

*Each Peach Pear Plum*, Janet and Allen Ahlberg
*Mr. Grumpy's Outing*, John Burningham
*Where the Wild Things Are*, Maurice Sendak
*The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, Eric Carle
*Titch*, Pat Hitchins
*Dogger*, Shirley Hughes
*The Owl Who Was Afraid of the Dark*, Jill Tomlinson
*Bear Hunt*, Anthony Browne
*Not Now, Bernard*, David McKee
*Lady David*, Dick King-Smith
*The Tale of Peter Rabbit*, Beatrix Potter
*Little Grey Rabbit to the Rescue*, Alison Uttley

More challenging works for this group include:

*The Iron Man*, Ted Hughes
*A Necklace of Raindrops*, Joan Aiken
*Just So Stories*, Rudyard Kipling

**Ages Seven to Eleven**

These children should read verse by writers such as Ogden Nash, Brian Patten and James Reeves and fiction by such writers as Rumer Godden, Russel Hoban, Rosemary Sutcliffe, Joan Aiken, T.H. White, Leon Garfield, Richard Adams, Jill Paton Walsh and Roald Dahl.

Classic poetry for this group include:

*Sea Fever*, John Masefield
*The Wreck of the Hesperus*, H.W. Longfellow
*The Jumblies*, Edward Lear
*The Listeners*, Walter de la Mare
*You Are Old, Father William*, Lewis Carroll
*Macavity, the Mystery Cat*, T.S. Eliot
*The Highwayman*, Alfred Noyes
*It Was Long Ago*, Eleanor Farjeon
*Tarantella*, Hillaire Belloc.

"Long established children's fiction" include:

*Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, Lewis Carroll
*Peter Pan*, J.M. Barrie
*Just William*, Richmal Crompton
*Swallows and Amazons*, Arthur Ransome
*The Wind in the Willows*, Kenneth Graham
*The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, C.S. Lewis
*Winnie the Pooh*, A.A. Milne
*The Jungle Book*, Rudyard Kipling
*The Railway Children*, E. Nesbit
*The Little House on the Prairie*, Laura Ingalls Wilder
*What Katy Did*, Susan Coolidge
*The Borrowers*, Mary Norton.

Texts that "broaden perspectives and extend thinking" for this age group include:

*The Once and Future King*, T.H. White
*How the Whale Became*, Ted Hughes
*The Wolves of Willoughby Chase*, Joan Aiken
*The Hobbit*, J.R.R. Tolkien.

**Ages Eleven to Fourteen**

These children should read such plays as: *Under Milkwood* by Dylan Thomas and *Pygmalion* by George Bernard Shaw and poetry by poets such as: Seamus Heaney, W.H. Auden, Robert Graves, R.S. Thomas, Grace Nichols, Vernon Scannell, Elizabeth Jennings, John Betjeman, Wendy Cope, William Blake, S.T. Coleridge, Thomas Hardy, Robert Browning, John Keats, Alfred Lord Tennyson and Emily Dickinson.

Suitable fiction includes:

*Treasure Island*, R.L. Stevenson
*Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Mark Twain
*Little Women*, Louisa May Alcott
*Robinson Crusoe*, Daniel Defoe
*Wessex Tales*, Thomas Hardy
*Jane Eyre*, Charlotte Bronte
*A Christmas Carol*, Charles Dickens.

**Ages Fourteen to Sixteen**

These pupils should read at least one play by one of a list of authors including: Arthur Miller, Bill Naughton, J.B. Priestly, R.B. Sheridan, Arnold Wesker, Thornton Wilder, Oliver Goldsmith, Oscar Wilde, Robert Bolt, Peter Shaffer, Tom Stoppard, Alan Bennett and Henrik Ibsen. Suitable poets include Thomas Gray, William Wordsworth, Percy Bysshe Shelley, Matthew Arnold, Robert Burns, Christina Rossetti, John Donne, Geoffrey Chaucer, John Clare, Robert Frost, Philip Larkin, W.B. Yeats, Sylvia Plath and Dannie Abse.

Novels include:

*Gulliver's Travels*, Jonathan Swift
*Silas Marner*, George Eliot
*A Tale of Two Cities*, Charles Dickens
*The Mayor of Casterbridge*, Thomas Hardy
*Wuthering Heights*, Emily Brontë
*Pride and Prejudice*, Jane Austen
*The Moonstone*, Wilkie Collins
*The Red Badge of Courage*, Stephen Crane

Other suitable authors include Graham Greene, D.H. Lawrence, H.G. Wells, H.E. Bates, William Golding, George Orwell, L.P. Hartley, John Steinbeck, Aldous Huxley, Ernest Hemingway, Harper Lee, Laurie Lee, Ray Bradbury, Somerset Maugham, Evelyn Waugh, Mildred Taylor, John Wyndham, Doris Lessing, Susan Hill, Joseph Conrad, E.M. Forster, Richard Hughes, Winifred Holtby and Alexander Solzhenitsyn.

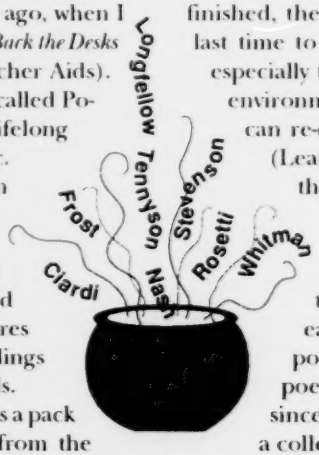
# Poetry Pot

by ELAINE S. WIENER

Shhh. Darken the room. Light the candle. Chant a mood setting poem as everyone settles around the poetry pot.

It's a timeless ritual which has its own evolution each year because each group of children responds in original ways. It's also a reminder to me that I, however, am not timeless. I was thirty years old, twenty-six years ago, when I first read Albert Cullum's *Push Back the Desks* (now published by Fearon Teacher Aids). The second I read the chapter called Poetry Pot, I knew I had taken on a lifelong commitment to the art of magic.

And magic it is. As the children sit around the pot, we discuss how we're going to listen to sounds written by people who can make words paint beauty and excitement. We listen for pictures of places, and we listen for feelings which also live in our own minds.




A chosen child mystically pulls a pack of thirty-two duplicate poems from the ancient cauldron we call the poetry pot. The teacher reads the poem by candlelight. The intonation of the reading is punctuated by flickering shadows. As these twenty-six years have passed by, the look of six-, seven-, and eight-year-old faces in candlelight never fails to reveal such wonder. Children need magic. I need magic.

Lights on! The pack of poems is distributed. Thirty-two voices read together. "Who will dare?" Then a group of three or four recite. Finally solo after solo, and then a total group reading is repeated.

Lights out! A new pack of duplicate poems is pulled out of the pot by a new "chosen" small hand. Shy children recite softly; blustering children "act" the recitation. "Who will dare?" provokes even more volunteers.

Only two or three poems are "discovered" each Friday afternoon. When the last poem is finished, the candle-lit room is darkened one last time to reminisce, to think, to talk, and especially to "observe" the look of a magical environment. Our memory will last until we can re-experience poetry pot next week. (Learning that one can hold pleasure in the mind is a side goal.)

Then partners, small groups and sometimes a single child all cozy up to various corners, outside trees or a desk or two to recite to each other. The room buzzes with poetry from our folders; this week's poetry and last week's and all the weeks since September. By June each child has a collection for childhood eternity.

Some years, when the chemistry is right, we draw, paint, practice, narrate, act out, develop stage presence, perfect microphone projection—all for a poetry show.

Some years are not performing years. But every year we read by candlelight the world's great poets, and we believe that poetry is profound and joyful and silly and sad and comical—and especially magical.

**Elaine Wiener teaches first, second and third graders in Garden Grove. She may be reached at 714/538-2636.**

# Philosophy: The International Language

by JERRY CHRIS

*"Education is the sense that certain kinds of questions must be answered by a Hegel and not Joyce Brothers. That is what we've lost."*

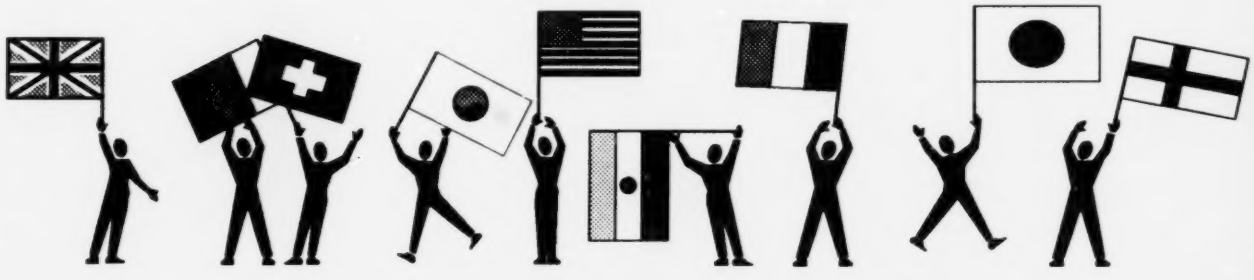
These words from Allan Bloom's *The Closing of the American Mind* poignantly earmark a major tragedy in modern education: despite our efforts to teach critical thinking and problem solving, we have neglected the very foundation for those endeavors—classical philosophy. From Tao to Plato to Kant to Sartre, man has sought answers in his search for truth, beauty and goodness. And now, as educators throughout California seek bridges within an increasingly culturally diverse society, the international language of philosophy seems ever more significant.

Content-area teachers, faced with Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate examinations, might immediately question the adaptability of philosophy within the English, math, social science or science curriculum. Perhaps this very question is a reflection of Bloom's criticism. Teaching critical thinking requires a movement away from absolute answers; it demands student inquiry, analysis and evaluation. Philosophy, readily gleaned from such simple texts as Durant's *The Story of Philosophy*, can provide that tool in every discipline.

Let us consider practical lessons in several subject areas. Suppose, for example, students are reading *Lord of the Flies* in a literature class. In his work, William Golding clearly expresses the motif that without the formal structure and laws which a government provides, man necessarily tends toward evil and self-destruction. Two great philosophers, John Locke and Thomas Hobbes, are diametrically opposed concerning the goodness of man's nature, with Hobbes agreeing with Golding. The teacher now has several possibilities for high-level, critical thinking activities. An examination question might ask the students to evaluate Golding's position in light of the philosophy of Hobbes and Locke. Their debate would also provide an excellent foundation for a written dialogue as a final essay prompt. For the teacher who enjoys role-playing activities, perhaps Hobbes, Locke and Golding could bring their argument to the classroom.

Well and fine, the math teacher might suggest, but philosophy has its base in the humanities, not in mathematics. Not necessarily so. Consider this statement from Bertrand Russell: "People have discovered how to make reasoning symbolic. . .. The aim of life then should be to equal the perfection of mathematics by confining itself to statements similarly exact, and similarly true before all experience." Students might now be asked to write an essay that explains whether or not things which they value in their life can be reduced to mathematical formulas. Some answers will be obvious; most will agree that affairs of the heart go far beyond what is measurable. However, students, upon further introspection, will discover that the nature of other facets of being a teenager are very mathematical, such as music and dance. Additionally, math teachers should be aware that philosophy offers excellent opportunities for interdisciplinary reading. Books with a mathematical basis, such as Hofstadter's *The Mind's Eye*, or *Gödel, Escher, Bach*, are readily available in every high school library, and current best sellers which feature characters whose philosophy of life is founded in mathematics, such as Hoeg's *Smilla's Sense of Snow*, abound.

The marriage between social science and philosophy seems to be a natural. Indeed, the Theory of Knowledge course in International Baccalaureate requires a unit on historiography—the evaluation of truth within the writing



of history. As a jump-off point, students might consider Mortimer Adler's statement that history did not take place in 1532 or 1951, but rather in the year "I Read"; in other words, history takes place only as described by the historian or as interpreted by the reader from the text.

One of the most successful and interesting civics lessons I have seen is the "Philosophers' Cocktail Party." One week before the "party," the teacher assigns each individual in the class a philosopher to research and role play. He also gives each student specific questions to answer concerning his character's views on the role of government in society. At the party, which might be complete with soft drinks and brownies, the students (philosophers) must mingle with their colleagues to answer all questions assigned to all the philosophers. For added fun, extra credit can be granted for "raps" delivered from the point of view of the individual philosopher. This also provides excellent review for the final.

Without philosophical discussion, modern science is hollow. In fact, most universities now require ethics as an integral part of their science curriculum. DNA research, gene splicing, prenatal surgery—indeed, every scientific advancement—demand an analysis of intention (Kant) and consequence (Mill), of the common good (Plato) and individual rights (Spinoza), of extremism (Hedonists) and moderation (Aristotle). In addition, discussion of the scientific method, inductive vs. deductive reasoning, paradigms and phenomenology will raise critical thinking levels well above simple lecture or experiment-based formats.

Ethical discussion, however, should not be confined to the science classroom. At a time when the public screams for educators to improve the values of today's youth, ethical philosophy provides an easy avenue whereby teachers can at least cause their students to reflect on the consequences of any action, whether that action be in literary fiction, a historical decision or a scientific investigation. As society drifts away from absolutes—from dogmatic interpretations of literature, from the concept of historical "fact," from mathematical axioms—the teacher becomes the facilitator for the students' varied judgments on every issue or problem. This, however, is not to say that absolute beliefs in themselves should be dismissed as a legitimate philosophy, as evidenced by Kant's Categorical Imperative or Plato's Philosopher Kings.

Thematic approaches to content, rather than arrangement by chronology, facilitate the use of philosophical discussion; this works particularly well in team-taught, interdisciplinary classes. In our humanities umbrella, our units include:

- The Nature of Man
- Communication and Logic
- Man in Society
- Power and Authority
- The Search for Truth and Beauty
- Ethics
- Metaphysics
- Love.

Each of these themes allows us to develop our content, cross over to the other disciplines, and evaluate mankind's beliefs and movements through philosophical eyes. Several of our key role-playing activities and seminar discussions revolve around *The Great Books of the Western World;* through the use of the "Syntopican" index, students can focus immediately on the philosophical beliefs of any given philosopher on any given topic. A thematic approach also opens the door for exciting literature with a philosophical motif, such as *The Tao of Pooh* by Hoff and *First You Have to Row a Little Boat* by Bode, in addition to classics such as *Siddhartha* by Hesse.

Jacob Bronowski, in his *Ascent of Man,* has stated, "It is important that students bring a certain ragamuffin, barefoot irreverence to their studies; they are not here to worship what is known, but to question it." Indeed, education is now some fifteen years removed from the mere regurgitation of facts as a measurement of student and teacher success. As we approach the 21st century, only one universal methodology remains intact that crosses all disciplines and languages—philosophical inquiry. Bronowski's message only echoes Socrates' words from 2500 years ago: "The unexamined life is not worth living."

**Jerry Chris was one of the CAG Summer Seminar teachers. He teaches at Mission Viejo High School, 25025 Chrisanta, Mission Viejo, CA 92691.**

# Alternative Assessment Strategies in Language Arts

by JOAN JACOBS

Our schools have changed, but perhaps not all for the worse. In California high schools, it comes as no surprise to educators that our student population is not what it was even four years ago. With increased pressures from all facets of society, not the least of which is television, our students no longer come necessarily equipped with the academic skills or motivation we might once have expected. As a result, we see bright students who dislike what used to be popular assignments and are unskilled in writing the papers that used to be almost second nature and certainly likely of success.

If we do not address this issue directly, however, we are unlikely to continue as educators for the long term, except as cynical ones. It's important to note that our students today who lack those "essential" skills also bring with them a range of expertise that varies from top-notch computer skills to publishing to singing professionally, which our former students, because of vastly different demographics and opportunities, may have lacked.

In light of this changing population, however, we need to look to our audience for clues on how to best engage their attention and create an atmosphere in which they enjoy, once again, the idea of learning and being challenged.

All of us have met the student who reads continuously, almost to the exclusion of anything else and who refuses on principle to do any assignment that he deems to be busy work; this student can be seen carrying a grade of D in a class that mandates daily homework to be turned in, even though he consistently earns A's on the tests. We are all familiar with another student who is so motivated by attention that she will risk her relationship with the teacher to maintain an audience of her peers and who varies from grandstanding about irrelevant issues one day to giving nearly perfect speeches on class-sanctioned topics the next. All these children need to learn the content, yet each internalizes it differently.

For these students comes alternative assessment: the idea that a student can demonstrate mastery of a content area in more than one way.

Today's students are not likely to respond favorably to the "Here's a worksheet; it's due tomorrow" procedure that we may have grown up with. Our new population requires new strategies. For these students alternative assessments may prove helpful for some of the benchmark or culminating activities in the class.

To this end, I offer a potpourri of ideas that have worked for students in my English classes, both at the sophomore gifted and the senior college prep levels.

Some students may still fail these assignments. Alternative assessment is not a panacea. But given that only about ten percent of our population prefers to learn from lectures and tests, we need to work with that majority who have long been neglected in our procedures. More students will internalize the material better in the long run than if they were given an objective 100-point test or ten worksheets or a paper they don't care about.

**Alternatives to Essays**

1. Have students write about themselves in the style of the author they have just studied. I generally use this with Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* and have the students introduce themselves as if they were being written about by Chaucer as one of the members of the pilgrimage.
2. Have students keep a journal from the point of view of one of the characters they have read about. Or if you are studying a specific time period, have the student pick a typical person (baker, priest, etc.) and write from that perspective. Depending upon the age of your students you may choose to make it more academic by having the students incorporate their individual research into this journal.
3. Allow the students to select from a number of writing options to demonstrate their knowledge of the content area. A short newspaper or magazine works well with groups, and for the students who prefer individual work you might suggest an oral history if the time period permits. As alternatives in this kind of list, I offer traditional research papers on a topic that the student and I agree upon; a book report on a related work that the student reads individually; and generally, I also allow a more open-ended option that allows the student to think of a written project, subject to approval.
4. Have the students compare/contrast themselves to a group of characters in a work.

Which character is the student most like and why? This assignment works best if the work being studied has a fairly large number of characters who are clearly defined. When studying historical work, suggest that the student become the author—in 1994. What would be the artist's perspective today? What would be his or her major concerns? How would the writer discuss these current issues?

5. After finishing a murder mystery novel of their choice and while working on *Macbeth*, I remind the students of all the murders and motives they have read about. Then I have them write their own murder mystery. They generally ask a plethora of questions about length, plot, etc., to which I respond that I want the story to be complete and wonderful. Although I did have one parent question this assignment, the fiction that was turned in by the students was of the highest caliber, and I would recommend it.
6. While studying totalitarian states, the students form groups in which they brainstorm what they would include in a bill of rights, responsibilities and values. Once finished, they present their ideas to the class. That done, the students write an essay in which they judge which bill of rights they would most like to live under and why. If they disagree with a component of their favorite, they can explain their feelings, but should also include why that bill of rights is still the best one to live under, given the areas of disagreement.

**Non-written Options**

Non-written options need to be offered at various points in the year, and while they are often thought of as the "fun" projects, they can also carry academic weight.

1. It is important that at some time the student engage in documented research, but it need not always be the precursor to a formal paper. Once the form of the bibliographic information is clear, the students could research medieval foods. Their product: a bibliography of their research and the food prepared for the class. It's a nice culmination to a medieval unit.
2. Especially when my extracurricular demands are heavy, I look for the students' work to decorate my classroom. Currently, my seniors (new to me this semester) are turning in a bumper sticker that best exemplifies their life/attitude/experiences. When they turn it in, they explain to the class orally who they are and why the bumper sticker suits them. During the same period, my sophomore GATE students (whom I already know) will be creating a bumper sticker that best compresses the views of Macbeth or Lady Macbeth or Shakespeare into a pithy and witty statement.
3. While working on totalitarianism, have the students make a visual representation of the numbers of people killed in various purges (e.g., Holocaust, Armenia, Cambodia, Stalinist purges). If one bean equals 1,000 lives, for instance, they will be surprised to see visually how big ten million is.
4. As a culminating assignment for a World War I unit, the students created groups of three to four people and researched an area of World War I that we had not really discussed (e.g., women's role in the war, major battles, weapons and fighting strategies, life on the home front). When they had gathered enough information, they were to create a presentation that contained three of the following four components: written, visual, oral, kinesthetic. I gave the students lists of hypothetical project options for each area and allowed them some latitude in selecting from this list and creating their own.
5. Instead of the traditional mind-numbing book reports ("My book was about…it was very good"), have your students create a contest in which they "sell" their book to the class. I offer suggestions as to how this could be done (videos, speeches, sound effects, visual aids, costumes, posters, dramatic reading, etc.) and give them plenty of lead time. On the day that the presentations begin, I tell each student to keep track of their three favorite presentations, because they will be "buying" these books with the coupons that I'll give out. You can give the winners prizes, extra credit, or the option of presenting their project at a school fair.
6. Occasionally as a short break, I'll give random groups of students two pipe cleaners with which they must create a symbol for a character. When they've finished, they explain their results to the class. This is especially effective the day before a test to get them calm.

**Kohlberg's Model**

If you are familiar enough with Kohlberg's Model of Moral Development to teach it, have the students decide which level different characters are on. When explaining this idea, I generally use as an example *The Dead Poets' Society*, as it offers clearly defined characters on a number of different levels. This exercise helps students discover characters' motivations and acts as a continuity builder over the course of the academic year if you refer to it more than just once.

When the work under study offers the opportunity for multiple interpretations, you can begin a good discussion by telling each student to bring his or her idea of the perfect present for a given character. They need to take into account the character's needs, wants, available resources, personality, etc. When they explain their present, they must justify why this is the best. You may want to place parameters on this; tell students that anything goes or that you want the gift to be something tangible, something from that time period, etc.

**The Novel Party**

I've also included one full-blown assignment for use when you want groups of students to read novels different from other groups. (This was one of those times when necessity really did create invention; there weren't enough novels for the entire class to read, so I broke them into groups of four to six and distributed a variety of novels.)

### The Novel Party

Your goals for this project are several:

1. You are to throw a party using the novel your group has read as an organizing theme. To that end, consider the kinds of room decorations, costumes, music, food, atmosphere, and activities that would be most appropriate. The theme should be immediately evident and clear upon entering the room.

   By the time the party has ended (one class hour) everyone should feel as if they have been so far immersed into the topic/themes of your book that they have actually experienced the novel, though they have not yet read it. The goal is that they retain your message.

2. Enjoy yourselves in a self-controlled manner.

   (Your party should be well planned before it begins. During the party would not be a good time to discuss seating options, for instance.)

3. Creativity is essential. Consider all the ways you have ever learned/been taught a subject like a novel and expand from there. Go beyond what you have seen others do. Be free spirits with a purpose. Keep us safe and use common sense, but otherwise don't place artificial limits on yourselves.

4. You need to work well with each other and pull your own weight within the group.

   (Consider what you have learned about Bloom's Taxonomy and Kohlberg's Model of Moral Development. Keep these two educational gurus in mind as you plan your party.)

5. Use various senses: auditory, visual, kinesthetic. Remember that when you teach a lesson physically, it aids in the retention of your ideas, it also causes the brain to grow. You are, for this hour, a gardener of huge brains. Cultivate them well!

6. Have fun!

**Alternative Evaluation Strategies**

As important as the assignment is the evaluation of it. Students have the right to know how they are being graded before they begin to work on a project. We must tell them not only the number of points it is worth, but what criteria we will be looking at. While assigning a project, I demonstrate what I expect by using examples from previous classes; I show them quality student-made videos with comments afterward about what could have been improved from my point of view. If I'm the one doing the grading, they should be aware of my version of the ideal form. We discuss what they could suggest to improve the examples that already demonstrate quality.

As an interesting sidenote, one of the characteristics that distinguishes gifted students is their desire to be surrounded by quality—and their subsequent dislike of anything that isn't. A discussion of quality, then, can be a watershed experience for many who may never have thought of what components go into a great presentation.

Periodically I have my students peer edit/grade each other's papers. Uncomfortable as this is to some, it is supported by writing research and offers several benefits. It's often easier to learn editing skills on a paper written by someone else. Since the student isn't already certain of what was meant, clarity becomes key. It is possible for the students to write more often without sending the teacher over the brink of insanity and when the students learn what to look for, they are more comfortable with revising their papers before turning them in.

On page 19 is an example of a recent rubric used on an in-class essay. Note that any of these categories could be deleted completely and replaced (or not) with some other component. When creating a rubric for your use, consult with your students on it before simply handing it to them. Or after exposing them to one that you have finished, ask them to work with you on the rubric when you give the next assignment.

The rubric eliminates much of the concern students have when dealing with their grades; most complaints traditionally have centered on "I have no clue what she/he wants. How am I supposed to give it to him/her?"

Another benefit of the rubric if used with peer editors is that they have very specific information to look for, rather than the usual global concern of "Is it a good essay?"

With alternative assessment options available to us, students will hardly be likely to complain about how boring class is, nor will they be as likely to skip homework assignments since they can't already know the answer until after they have done it. Student involvement and discovery is crucial to their success as independent thinkers. By addressing the issue of changing needs, we can ensure that our students will learn not only our content area, but they will go on to process the skills they have learned in our classes long after graduation.

**Joan Jacobs teaches English at West High School in Bakersfield. She may be reached there at 1200 New Stine Road, Bakersfield, CA 93309.**



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## PEER EDITING OF ESSAY

Name of Essay Writer_____ Peer Editor Number_____

_____**Mechanics: Grammar/Punctuation/Spelling**

5 - 0-1 errors
4 - 2-3 errors
3 - 4-5 errors
2 - 6-7 errors
1 - 8 or more errors

_____**Content: Message/Purpose**

5 - The writer has an important point that is not obvious to the reader. The essay is clearly directed.

4 - The writer has a point, it is stated clearly but is sometimes obvious. There is a clear beginning, middle and end.

3 - The writer has a direction, though it's occasionally interrupted by a digression. The content is visible, but is not necessarily new.

2 - The writer did the assignment but did not seem to know what to say. The direction is not clear, nor is the message.

1 - The writer has no clue about direction or message.

_____**Specific Use of the Novel**

5 - Sources cited are accurate, insightful, and relevant to the message. The writer supports all major points with clear examples.

4 - Sources are generally correct, though some details have been modified. Relevance is generally there. Most points are supported with examples.

3 - Student used examples but not consistently. Details are not used or are only partially correct. The link between major messages and supportive examples is weak.

2 - The writer did the assignment but did not give evidence of having read the novel. The writer did not support big ideas with examples in any consistent way.

1 - The writer has no idea about how to use examples to support an essay.

_____**Use of Time.**

5 - The essay seemed long enough to justify an hour's worth of writing.

4 - The essay indicated a substantial amount of writing, but the writer seemed to spend a length of time reading notes rather than writing.

3 - The essay is of moderate length, it fulfilled the assignment but did not indicate that the writer had plenty to say or an effective use of time.

2 - The essay was short, given the time constraint, and the reader suffered as a result.

1 - Essay? What essay? You say it took an hour to do this?

_____**Overall Impact**

5 - The essay is interesting, clear, informative, and compelling to read. Once started into it, the reader can only reluctantly turn his/her attention to something else.

4 - The essay is interesting, but not quite as much as what's happening after this test. The writer is clear but not quite compelling.

3 - The essay does the job but without that sense of panache.

2 - The essay is unclear or muddy in sections. The writer has not given the reader the motivation to want to read past the first few sentences.

1 - The essay not only does not maintain interest, but upon finishing it, the reader has no notion of what the point was.

_____ X 2 = _____/50
Total Points

**TOTAL SCORE:**_____



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# Behind the Door

*Students in Julia Candace Conliss' class of 8 year olds at the Murman School looked behind the door, and this is what they found.*

There was a flower garden
Brightly shining
Some butterflies
Are playing tag in the trees.
The butterfly king is happily dining
And the butterfly queen starts to tease.
The butterflies, the butterflies
Are flying round their king.
Then the brightly colored flowers
To the queen begin to sing.
I tried to get through the door
But no matter how hard I tried
I could not quite get through the door
And so then my dream
Just, died.
—Elisabeth Cohen

Behind the door
Is a world of written words.
Behind the door
Is a picture of happiness.
Behind the door
Twinkling stars play.
Behind the door
The moon talks to me.
Behind the door
Are many thoughts of curiosity.
Behind the door
Is your poetry side.
Behind the door poetry flows
Like a waterfall splashing
down.
Behind the door is love.
—Camilla Marcus

Behind the door
A forgotten memory
Lies on the floor
Gleaming
Shining
And waiting
For someone
To remember it.
This memory
Is one of the memories
That is almost
Never remembered.
A memory that is
Most cherished...
The memory of childhood.
—Mollie Birney

Behind the door
Is a sea of beautiful flowers,
Fresh air and the golden sun.
The golden air smells so clean.
The flowers look like a dove of peace
Flying in the sky.
There are mountains
Covered with snow
Like the fluffy white clouds above.
Little rabbits scurry to their homes fast
Like the wind whistling in your ears.
An eagle swoops overhead
Then it is gone.
Behind the door is a sea of beautiful
flowers
Fresh air, and the golden sun.
—Alison Kase

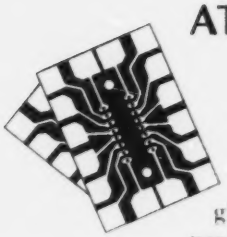
Behind the door
Is a piece of comedy
The piece of comedy
Jumps into me.
I start of squirm, giggle,
And laugh.
The piece of comedy
Makes me go crazy.
It tells me jokes
And plays with me.
And now the piece of comedy
Stays in the door.
But I come and see it
Every day.
—Lisa Becker

I open a door
I look behind.
I see a hallway of doors!
I open each one
And what do I find?
Behind each one is a good book.
I read each book
One by one
And poof!
I am lost in a forest
With stones to lead me home.
In each book I find myself inside the pages
Walking through a door of adventure.
—Stephanie Mitchell

Behind my door
There was a monster
The ugliest monster
I ever did see.
And he had a big old mouth
With a thousand teeth
Gleaming right at me.
A nasty look was in his eye
Dribble was dripping out of his mouth.
I offered him a piece of steak
Then I ordered him to look south.
The monster did look south indeed
I hit him in the head
And when he went out crying,
I went upstairs to bed!
—Josh Phillips

# TECHNET

## Dynamic Connections at the Junior High—Using the AT&T Learning Network by Terrie Gray



This article describes my experiences during the 1993 fall semester as two of my 8th grade classes (Science and Honors English) collaborated in a telecommunications project sponsored by AT&T. Although the activities conducted during the semester correlate with our specific curricular topic—nutrition—they can be adapted to a variety of topics and content areas. As education embarks on the Information SuperHighway, projects facilitated by telecommunications will become increasingly common. I hope the AT&T format and this model encourages you to come aboard.

I found that participation in a survey-based project fosters skill development in several areas, including:

- creating survey questionnaires
- tabulating data
- using spreadsheet and database tools to organize data and provide examples
- creating meaningful and accurate charts and graphs with computer software
- analyzing data to discover patterns, trends, and relationships
- developing and supporting hypotheses
- defending conclusions in written and oral presentations
- using a computer and modem to communicate with students at distant locations

Six classes collaborated with ours in the Learning Network. The teachers were Governors' Fellows who had worked together last summer at the Teachers and Technology Institute. Each was responsible for sponsoring a project in either math or science that reflected the values and vision of AT&T including: valuing teamwork, innovation, integrity, dedication to "customers," and respecting the individual. We were charged with the mission of encouraging our students to design devices that incorporated the future thrusts of the corporation: voice/audio processing, visual communications, messaging, wireless communication, and networked computing.

### STEP ONE: Creating a Project Topic

When we first got "on-line," we spent two weeks getting to know each other by exchanging Classroom Surveys of Class Favorites (music, food, sports, etc.) We also shared information about areas of local interest and about our local economies. The formal project was not begun until nearly a month had gone by. During the interval, each classroom brainstormed possible topics, and selected one that seemed interesting and would fit in with the course of study. These topics were proposed on-line to give the partners a chance to respond. This turned out to be an important phase in the development process; my classes were interested in designing vehicles that would not operate in the presence of a handgun. Their motivation was to limit the number of drive-by shootings. Our partners in Detroit, however, were uncomfortable with the topic. The teacher remarked, "My students face this problem every day—they don't want to have to deal with it as part of this 'fun' project, too!" Naturally, we wanted to be sensitive to the needs of our peers and changed our focus.

The project ultimately designed by my classes was an outgrowth of a unit on Nutrition and Digestion. We discovered one day that many students did not eat breakfast; some simply because it was inconvenient—others because they wanted to avoid getting fat. We decided to find out if students in other states shared similar concerns and habits.

### STEP TWO: Involving Students at Other Sites

One principle of telecommunications is that the most effective projects are those that are absolutely dependent on interaction of the distant partners. If the project could be conducted satisfactorily within the single classroom, it is not an ideal telecommunications project. So, once the topic is initiated, the means of involving the other sites must be determined. Since my students were curious about the eating habits of their peers, they had lots of questions—and

those questions became the basis for a set of surveys. The surveys were divided into two sections; the first asked general questions such as:

How often do you eat breakfast?
always sometimes never

Where do you eat breakfast?
at home at school

The second section asked respondents to check boxes according to what foods they had eaten *that day*, for example:

milk? cereal? meat or eggs?
fruit or juice? sweets?

The students generated one survey for breakfast and another one for lunch. Each student carried a copy of each survey and got information from cla smates throughout the day. We also uploaded copies of the surveys to each of our partner schools.

An interesting development is that one student grew intensely curious about students' perceptions of body image and how that related to their eating habits. Because she felt the class-designed surveys would not yield the information she wanted, she designed her own survey, launched it to the partners, and worked with a team to conduct it at the home site. Her survey—which was to be anonymous—included questions such as:

Are you comfortable with your weight?
Have you ever tried to diet?
Have you ever been told you were fat?
Do you ever skip meals?

I am pleased that this student was engaged in the project to this degree, and that the project was flexible enough to accommodate her interest. I feel that through this activity, I was able to differentiate the curriculum to include this specific student's needs.

### STEP THREE: Working with the Information

Over the next several weeks, students responded to surveys and requests for designs from other classrooms as they collected information for their own project, including data from our Learning Network partners. At this point, the two classes I had working on the project diverged: the English class began focusing on interpreting the information, while the science class focused on learning about the body's nutritional needs.

After every classroom responded, the students began transforming the information into a usable form. In the computer lab, I was able to use the AT&T project as the reason for learning how to use a database and spreadsheet. It has been my experience that teaching students how to use these tools without a curricular context has very limited impact. The "*Why* should we do this?" is not clear. Having piles of survey printouts and needing to make sense out of all the responses justified the use of the tools.

Because we had limited use of the computer lab, I gave my students a very brief—yet successful—introduction to the database which consisted of the following few steps:

1. **Naming the parts (database vocabulary)**
   - field - a category of information
   - record - a list of all the information-containing fields for one person or item
   - show list - show all the records at once on the screen
   - sort - organize the information in a field alphabetically or numerically
   - record selection - choosing only specific entries according to specific criteria (e.g., gender, age, weight, etc.)
2. **Entering the data**
   I made this a follow-the-leader activity. Using a liquid crystal display unit, I performed each step of creating a new database, and then waited for each student to do the same at his or her station. Once each student demonstrated mastery of the basic skills, the next step was to have them transfer data from the survey forms to the computer. After all the survey data had been transferred and saved, an advanced student (who had taken a computer literacy class) saved all of the data onto a master disk. Each student was given a copy of the master data base.
3. **Examining the data**
   At this stage students practiced organizing information using the sort and record selection commands. They learned that the record selection feature could be used to answer questions like:
   Which students most often eat breakfast?
   Which students are most likely to eat sweets for lunch?

Then they discovered a problem. Because our school had surveyed nearly 300 persons, and our Detroit partner had surveyed only 15, California would always be selected or sorted as the state with the most students with *any* of the eating habits. So, I had a reason to introduce the spreadsheet—to perform calculations!

### STEP FOUR: Re-evaluating the Data

In discussions with the students about what we could do to examine the data in a way that put each school on an equal footing, we came up with the plan of turning the total of each field into a percentage of the total number of students surveyed at that site. Then we could compare percentages evenly. In one class period, students learned how to open their master database, copy the data, and paste it into a new spreadsheet. Then, we went through a few introductory exercises to become familiar with this tool.

1. **More vocabulary**
   - cell - one box containing text or numbers, labeled by row and column (e.g., C8)
   - row - a horizontal set of cells
   - column - a vertical set of cells
   - formulas - a set of numbers preceded by an = sign that commands the computer to perform the mathematical functions indicated
   - format - how the text or numbers are displayed (e.g., centered, with 2 decimals, etc.)
   - bar graph and pie chart - The important distinction here was what happened to the data in the visual representation. The bar graph shows raw data against a vertical scaled axis. The pie chart shows four values as portions of 100%.

Students discussed which was better suited for what kind of needs. The bar graph better illustrated the comparisons between students in four states, while the pie chart would be appropriately used to illustrate which items in an inventory brought in the greatest revenue.

2. **Using the spreadsheet to calculate percentages and averages.**
   Again using the follow-the-leader method, I showed students how to insert a new column between data columns in their spreadsheets. The old data columns contained raw data from the surveys. In the first cell of the new column, they typed in a formula to calculate a percentage: *= cell label/total number*

   Then they clicked at the top of the column to select the entire column, and chose the command FILL DOWN from the edit menu. This pasted the formula in each cell of the column, adjusting the reference cell automatically. After I led one example, and monitored students as they practiced with another, they worked independently to complete the process with the rest of the columns.

3. **Creating charts and graphs**
   To make creating charts and graphs easier, students created a *new* spreadsheet and pasted the percentage data into it. Then they created a row labeled "Averages." First we talked about what mathematical steps we go through to obtain an average, then I shared the formula the computer uses which they typed into the new cell:

   *= sum(click first cell in column : click last cell in column)/number of cells*

   Then this formula was copied down the length of the row by selecting the row (clicking at the left edge) and choosing the FILL RIGHT command from the edit menu.

4. **Using data to answer questions**
   With percentages calculated and averages for all schools listed, students could then use the data to answer a variety of questions. At this stage we discussed questions in terms of complexity, and derived three levels:

   1st level - simple questions that report data directly. Example: What percentage of Colorado students ate pizza for lunch?

   2nd level - questions that compare data in one dimension only. Example: Which state has the highest percentage of students who do not eat breakfast?

   3rd level - questions that compare data in more than one dimension, and/or require interpretation of data. Example: Is there a correlation between the percentages of students who eat sweets for breakfast and fast food for lunch with the location of the school?

Students were then assigned to examine their spreadsheets, create two questions for each level and answer the questions using the data from the surveys.

Because the final small group report (students worked in pairs or trios) consisted of an essay in which the students presented their question, appropriate evidence and a conclusion, we had a reason to review the word processor! I demonstrated how to copy data from the database and a chart from the spreadsheet and paste them into a word processed document. This was a ten-minute lesson. From there the students were on their own. At this stage, the energy level in the room—and the noise level, too, I admit—was high. Parent visitors commented that they had never before seen this group so engaged in a project. Students who also happened to be members of the television broadcasting studio class spent time video taping work sessions and interviewing students about their findings. Computer-experienced students who finished early floated to other groups to help them complete their reports. Morgan, the student working independently, came in during my prep period and after school to complete her report. The only downside to students' enthusiasm was that when it was time to print out their final results, they had to go next door (where our networked laser printer is located) to retrieve their paper. It was hard to restrain them ALL from fetching their papers...they wanted to see them immediately!

Then, the completed reports were shared with the science students who had been focusing on the body's need for and use of nutrients. As part of their final activity in the unit, they were required to examine the survey results and compare them to the new Food Pyramid. Students were asked two questions: What changes should the people surveyed make in their eating habits and WHY? This was a challenging activity for them, yet most students demonstrated their understanding of basic nutrition. (My hope of course, is that they demonstrate that understanding further by modifying their own eating habits!) The final conclusions were:

- More people need to eat breakfast.
- People need to eat fewer sweets and fatty foods.

- People need to eat more fruits and vegetables.
- People need to eat more complex carbohydrates.

Incidental to the survey portion of the AT&T project was a design portion. Not all students participated in this part, but those who did were able to explore creatively and produced some delightful designs. The criteria for the "Nutrient Communicator" were that it must be portable and be able to:

- scan food to determine its purity/safety
- scan food to determine its nutrient values
- determine the user's nutritional needs
- communicate the food values and user needs

Many of the projects took the form of rings, bracelets, and watches with screens or audio reporting systems. Some were wallet-sized, some worked with hardware installed at the store like an ATM or a computer. Some sampled saliva, others read information from the user's hand, one was in the form of a color-changing lipstick, and another was designed specifically for the visually-impaired.

This portion of the activity was designed to provide students with the opportunity to apply the knowledge they had gained from their study of nutrition and from their behavioral study of eating habits. Students in both classes then were invited to create commercials or printed advertisements for their product.

Student reports, evaluations, and product designs were assembled into a group report which was sent to each of the partner schools, who sent their reports to us. The entire book—composed of seven sections—was duplicated and shared with school district administrators, parents, and community members at an open house during which students had a chance to speak about their perceptions of being involved in the project. I feel the telecommunications project was a wonderful means for learning new skills and for working with a variety of people. Students concurred:

*"The AT&T project means an opportunity to experience communication across the USA with students who share similar scientific ideas. It provides the essential atmosphere and support to express and expand our creative abilities and group work skills. We receive an insight and chance to work with today's technology and tomorrow's future."* —*Sri Dalton*

*"...The major benefit that has evolved from working with AT&T was the use of computers...Another profitable outcome for me was the higher level of thinking skills we demonstrated when writing our reports."* —*Jennie Tripp*

*"I really liked doing this AT&T project. I had the opportunity to collect data, organize it, and convert it into a usable form. I also enjoyed the feeling of working with people across the nation via a network."* —*David Depper*

*"What I liked about the AT&T project was that we got to communicate with people from across the nation and see what kind of lifestyles they lead and what we have in common. It helps us to not stereotype people but welcome their ideas."* —*Spencer Knight*

*"Some of our ideas may spring someone's imagination to create something like a nutrient communicator. I hope that someday I can tell my kids that I helped design something by AT&T!"*
—*Linnea Beckett*

(NOTE: A survey is one of the easiest tools to use in a telecommunications project, and is adaptable to a wide variety of topics. Telecommunication partners can be found through many on-line services, including Internet, FredMail, American Online, and Prodigy. The primary advantage of the National Geographic KidsNet and AT&T Learning Network programs is that of structure. With these services, you are matched up with other subscribers; there is an established curriculum and time line; and there is consistent support and help from one or more coordinators. For more information about the AT&T Learning Network, please call 1-800-367-7225, ext. 4158.)

**Terrie Gray may be reached at 916/877-5141.**

Breanne Cadabona, Age 11
Patton School, Garden Grove

# A Tribute To Outstanding Teachers

*"No bubble is so iridescent or floats longer than that blown by the successful teacher."*

*—Sir William Osler*

*But what makes a successful teacher?* Is it the knowledge he possesses and his ability to share it with his students? Is it her willingness to go beyond what is required and seek out that which will enrich and extend her students' learning experiences? Is it his ability to motivate and challenge inquiring minds? Is it her example of daring to take risks which provides a safe place for student risk taking as well? Is it his demand for excellence which provides standards for students which will last a lifetime?

Of course, it is all of this and much more. No role is more demanding than that of an outstanding teacher. And perhaps the most demanding task is that of teaching the gifted, because gifted children are themselves more demanding. They are more demanding of our time since they require extensions beyond what is normally provided in typical texts and materials; they are more demanding of our intellect as they easily recognize errors of logic and fact (and can be quick to point them out); they are more demanding of equity because of their own heightened sensitivity to justice and fairness.

The California Association for the Gifted believes that it is important to recognize the vital role superior teachers play in providing appropriate educational experiences for gifted students. The most enlightened pedagogical theories are only as good as the teachers who put them into practice.

Therefore, CAG annually selects a classroom teacher from each of its eleven regions to honor at its statewide conference. We realize that in selecting a few, we are leaving out many others equally deserving. However, we hope that while spotlighting these eleven individuals, we also provide inspiration for others to continue in their efforts at serving gifted students.

Here are glimpses of this year's outstanding teachers, honored at the March conference in Palm Springs.

## BAY AREA REGION

**Ingrid Oyen** teaches math and science at Presidio Middle School in the San Franciso Unified School District. She has developed a challenging curriculum which includes her work in founding the Math Renaissance program at her school. She has incorporated "little discover areas" into her classroom where a student may read, play a math game, review scientific process, or work alone. The atmosphere in her class is one of excitement and constant discovery.

## CAPITOL REGION

**Sue Verne** is a teaching veteran of eighteen years, including five years of teaching Honors World History at Florin High School in the Elk Grove Unified School District. She has impressed both staff and students with her commitment to teaching excellence in general, and to gifted students in particular. Her dedication to gifted education and students is shown through her endless hours guiding and supporting students through a number of co- and extra-curricular activities such as academic decathlons, enrichment seminars, History Day competitions and Mock Elections.

**JOSHUA TREE REGION**

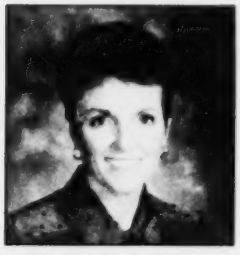
**Marie Coover** teaches a sixth grade GATE cluster class and teams with three other teachers at Taft Elementary School in Riverside Unified School District. She was selected for her outstanding teaching methods and her high motivation through interdisciplinary learning and thematic instruction. As a district mentor science teacher and the school site GATE coordinator, she has a definite commitment to academic excellence in all curricular areas.

**MISSION REGION**

**Ella Jarf** is a teacher of highly gifted second, third, and fourth graders at the Multnomah Highly Gifted Magnet School in the Los Angeles Unified School District. She has taught gifted students for twelve years. Her classroom is frequently used for class observations by students and faculty of California State University, Los Angeles and is considered an exemplary model of gifted education. She innovates, motivates and differentiates to create outstanding educational experiences for gifted students.

**MOUNT SHASTA REGION**

**Linda Jungwirth** teaches the GATE program at Hayfork Elementary School in Mountain Valley Unified School District in the mountains of northern California. Linda is a regular contributor to various computer publications. Her studies in technology and cognitive learning styles have benefited her school and district as well as her highly motivated students. Practical career investigations for the students have made her program highly successful and popular with parents.



**ORANGE REGION**

**Leah Welte** has been teaching or administrating programs for gifted students for twenty-four years. She currently teaches a fifth grade self-contained GATE class at Del Cerro Elementary School in the Saddleback Valley Unified School District. She is a superb teacher, creating a climate for learning which demands outright excellence, yet is open, trusting and accepting. She is also a skilled writer, presenter and a strong advocate for gifted education.

**PACIFIC REGION**

**Lydia Cruz-Machlitt** teaches a bilingual self-contained GATE class at Rose Avenue School in the Oxnard School District. She is recognized as an expert bilingual teacher and has developed teaching strategies appropriate for bilingual students. In addition, she conducts parent orientation meetings in Spanish, assists in the identification of gifted bilingual students, and makes home visits to explain the GATE program and the opportunities it offers to gifted children. She has made invaluable contributions to gifted children.

**PALOMAR REGION**

**Rosemarie Smith** is a GATE Team Leader at Point Loma High School in San Diego Unified School District. She is knowledgeable in her field, keeping abreast of the latest curriculum and methodology, communicating that knowledge to her colleagues and utilizing it in her classroom. She has been working on developing an interdisciplinary thematic approach to curricula for GATE teachers and has served as a trainer of trainers in the GATE Curriculum Framework task force.

**REDWOOD REGION**

**Wilhelm Schaser** teaches honors classes at Eureka High School and directs advanced/independent scientific research projects for highly talented students. His students have participated in regional, state and national competitions winning recognition and prizes. Most notable was the 1992-93 team which received a first place national award and $15,000 in the American Express Geography competition. He gives "over-and-above time" to challenge students to demonstrate their true potential.

**SAN JOAQUIN REGION**

**Maurine Anderson** enthusiastically teaches a full-time GATE class of fifth and sixth grade students at Ayer Elementary School in the Fresno Unified School District. She emphasizes integrated thematic instruction, higher order thinking skills, creativity and critical thinking. She is a dynamic mentor teacher in instructional practices who has developed and disseminated curricular materials in science, language arts and social studies.

**SANTA LUCIA REGION**

**Mary Strommer** is a sixth grade teacher and mentor teacher at P.A. Walsh Elementary School in Morgan Hill Unified School District. She is an innovator, leader and advocate for GATE. Mary has a long history of working with GATE leaders in California, Texas and New Mexico. She was the driving force in the revision of her district's identification process which now includes a portfolio assessment. She is described by her peers as "a role model for GATE."

share universal themes. I feel this knowledge of shared themes helps to create a supportive and accepting classroom. Literature is the perfect vehicle for this discovery.

What books will promote the growth that we would like to see in our students? No *one* book will fit all classrooms. As classroom teachers we know that each class has its own "aura," and it is wise to adopt a number of core books so classroom teachers will have literature choices. We must look closely at our book choices, since many authors are trying to write for the multicultural classroom. Students quickly recognize a contrived theme or character, and consequently the author loses credibility. One student shared with me that it really bothered her when an author put in Spanish words and didn't use them correctly.

My district has had an adopted set of core books for a number of years. I have found it is important to reevaluate and update a core list after a few years. The following are suggestions for a middle school core list:

**6th Grade**

Armstrong, W. *Sounder*
DeJong, M. *House of 60 Fathers*
DuBois, W. *Twenty-one Balloons*
George, J. *Julie of the Wolves*
Turnbull, A. *Maroo of the Winter Caves*

**7th Grade**

DeAngeli, M. *Door in the Wall*
Huynh, Q. *Land I Lost: Adventures of a Boy in Viet Nam*
Konigsburg, E. *Proud Taste for Scarlet and Miniver*
Paterson, K. *Master Puppeteer*
Taylor, T. *The Cay*

**8th Grade**

Carter, F. *Education of Little Tree*
Collier, J. *My Brother Sam is Dead*
Conrad, P. *Prairie Songs*
Freeman, R. *Immigrant Children*
Hunt, I. *Across Five Aprils*
Magorian, M. *Good Night, Mr. Tom*
Rostkowski, M. *After the Dancing Days*

I also suggest that middle school students read short stories by the following authors: Gary Soto, Maya Angelou, Isaac Singer, Sandra Cisneros, Gary Paulsen and Amy Tan.

This is by no means a complete list, but I believe that it provides a good foundation for student reading, and many of the books connect with the social science at that grade level.

In teaching any literature it is important to develop an atmosphere of trust because class discussion is a major vehicle for literary interpretation. Perhaps the most helpful training for successful discussion techniques comes from the Junior Great Books Foundation. They offer training in the shared inquiry method which will benefit any teacher, but especially a teacher of the gifted. Shared inquiry enables all students to build their own interpretations in a thoughtful way. This technique focuses on different student interpretations of the same text, allowing students from all cultures to have equal access to the text and to bring their experiences into their interpretation. In addition to the excellent training provided by the Great Books Foundation, the program also offers excellent literary selections from kindergarten through high school. All selections challenge students to understand the meaning of the author, to formulate their ideas and to listen to other points of view.

A major goal of a good literature program is to help create lifelong readers. To help attain this goal I provide time in class for students to enjoy literature of their choice. I help them to choose quality literature by providing a list of books that have been enjoyed by many middle school students. I find that students are thankful for some suggestions and guidance. They frequently suggest to their peers a book from the list, and I am constantly adding new books to the list. Through literature discussions students share their expectations of quality literature. They want an author that develops believable characters, makes them think and expresses ideas in a variety of ways using interesting and novel descriptions.

The atmosphere in our schools should encourage reading and make sure that a wide variety of quality reading materials are available at the school library or the local library. We as teachers should promote reading by providing a choice of follow-up projects and a time to share reading choices. There might be journal writing where students write to other students about what they are reading, SSR (sustained silent reading), and perhaps a character tea where students come dressed as a character from their book and share that book with the class.

I believe quality literature adds depth and meaning to students' lives. It gives them a way to escape into another world, understand another time period and realize that many other people in the world share their questions about life.

*To receive a copy of the reading list, send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to Linda Brug.*

**Linda Brug may be reached at DeAnza Middle School, 2060 Cameron, Ventura, CA 93003.**

*Continued from page 10*

These goals stress the need for both *excellence* (we should be first in the world in math and science) and *equity* (all students should be ready to learn by the time they enter school). The question as to whether we have the resources and energy to do both is still as lively an issue as it was a generation or more ago.

**Our Reluctance to be Excellent**

When an individual or a group acts in a clearly self-destructive fashion, it should stimulate our curiosity. Our societal resistance to providing a quality education for the best and brightest of our students is one such self-destructive act, and we, and our children, are likely to pay dearly for it in terms of second-class science, business, education, and art. We will have an increasing inability to compete in the economic and technological international competition in the near future.

The problem of gaining support for educating "gifted" students in the United States is essentially not an instructional problem: it is a values problem. Unless we understand that fact, we can find ourselves believing that we are arguing about technical issues of identification or acceleration and grouping, when what we are really in dispute about are our societal and personal values.

Our own cultural heritage inclines us in the direction of equity. Our ancestors broke away from an oppressive elitist society in England and elsewhere in Europe. Most of our ancestors fled from such regimes and cultures. Is it any wonder that we carry with us our concerns that some such group might set itself up as superior to the rest of us and tell us how to behave? On the other hand, we admire those who have achieved great things from humble beginnings. It is inherited privilege, not the privilege that comes from accomplishment, that we seem to dislike.

It is now abundantly clear from the field of behavioral genetics that there is a significant role played by genetic transmission in the development of intelligence. It is, of course, also true that such genetic capabilities as we have, have to be strongly nurtured in order to reach full development. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that some of us have more inborn capabilities in music or visual perception or linguistic ability than others (Plomin, 1988). The standard rule that good seed needs good soil in order to flourish intellectually is clearly true here as well.

Furthermore, the difference between those with substantial talent and those who do not have substantial talent in a given domain tends to increase over time. This increasing differential is due both to the developmental rate of growth in the skill (those going faster will developmentally pull away from those going slower) and to the fact that as one learns that one has an abundance of some talents and not of others, one will seek out experiences where the special talent can be exercised. It is not the iron-fingered student who practices two hours a day at the piano: it is the student who plays the piano with grace and skill and talent. By practicing an already well-developed skill, the player increases the distance between him/herself and others.

**Citizen Views on Giftedness**

Recently, the author participated in a study committee that presented a plan for the academically gifted to a local school board. As a prelude to that report, the school board engaged in citizen participation time. This allows any local citizen three minutes to comment on various aspects of the agenda that the school board is preparing to discuss. In this case, a large number of citizens took advantage of the opportunity to express themselves on the education of gifted students, and the results were most enlightening.

Half the group, mostly parents, complained about the lack of stimulation in the school program for their children and the resulting boredom and marking time that their children must endure. Some of these parents and citizens also discussed the importance of these students for our community and for our state and national goals and the unfavorable comparisons that are being made between performances of students in this country and those from other countries.

The other half of the citizen participation comments were very different.

These persons pointed out that they believed that it was undemocratic to separate high ability students out and place them in separate honors programs. They asked how these students would be expected to learn about life and form relationships with all groups in the society if they were continually clustered in small groups with one another? They also maintained that good teachers could provide effective education in heterogeneous groups in the middle school.

Here were two groups of intelligent and sincere persons looking at a particular program or situation and then coming down on quite opposite sides of the issue. How can that be?

The basic reason would seem to be that we all want mutually incompatible goals for our schools and for our students. In short, we want it all! We

want the child to be socially well adjusted *and* intellectually stimulated. We want equity and fairness in student assignment, *and* we want excellence in educational programming. We are not willing to give up one of these goals for the other. This dispute then is, what is the proper balance for these values in the school program? We are not disagreeing about whether it is important for the child to be intellectually stimulated or receive proper experience in working effectively with others, but about what the proper balance of these kinds of activities should be.

### The Difficulties of Reform

There are a number of puzzling elements to the current educational scene that require further reflection. We need to ask ourselves why we can't do what we know we should do? Why don't we have available special services for gifted underachievers? Why do we not provide special exercises to stimulate the gifted child intellectually until he is in the fourth grade, if then? The answer to many of these questions is that these needed policies require collective action. They cannot be done by a single teacher in his/her classroom. Collective action means the development of policy, a statement of rules and standards that govern the allocation of resources in the schools.

It is the desire to develop such special educational policies that runs afoul of the love-hate relationship between the society and the gifted individual (Gallagher, 1986). This is the only category of exceptional children for whom we seriously question whether we should provide special services. The reason is that one of the most fundamental values of the society fits under the value concept of vertical equity—*the unequal treatment of unequals to make them more equal* (Gallagher, 1985).

Such a concept fits the needs of the mentally retarded child and the child from poverty environments quite well, but it does not fit the gifted child. We have to find a different argument for the special education services for gifted children, and that argument is most frequently one of "enlightened self-interest." If we help these children now, we are strengthening our society and providing more competent physicians, lawyers, scientists, political leaders, and so forth that we may well need in the future.

This is the reason that programs for gifted students flower during periods of societal unease. When we worry about our collective or societal future, the desire to take advantage of the talents of these children becomes manifest and gets translated into special resources for these children.

### Educational Reform Movements and Values

When we embark on our periodic attempts at school reform, we are also engaging in expressions of personal and social values, not merely responding to the latest in educational research. Each of the current reform efforts reflects an aspect of our values. We are interested in how such reforms intersect with our thoughts and values about "gifted children."

#### I. Educational Reform—The Excellence Movement

Those of us who have been on the educational scene for a number of years have had a sense of déjà vu in listening to the latest complaints about the schools and their treatment of "excellence." The concerns being expressed now are remarkably similar to those expressed in the late 1950s and early 1960s in the Sputnik era when we felt ourselves in an educational or technological race with the Soviet Union (Gardner, 1983).

The major and significant difference between then and now is that then the federal government responded by investing large sums of money in education, much of it through the National Science Foundation, which supported major curriculum revision at the secondary school level. Programs like the School Mathematics Study group, the Chemical Bond Approach, the Biological Sciences Curriculum Study, and so forth, generated a major set of new curricula which worked to the benefit of gifted and talented students at the secondary school level, since these curricula all stressed high-level conceptualization and "hands on" practice in research—two objectives which fit well with the education of the gifted (Goodlad, 1964).

In contrast, the current interest of the federal government seems to be largely concerned with deficit financing. Their education program appears to be built upon exhortation to do better and reliance on the states to pick up the responsibility for improvement in education. This has resulted in a piecemeal approach in which some states have taken up the challenge while others have not.

The love/hate relationship of this society with gifted students is not hard to observe. We certainly love what such students and adults are able to accomplish when they are discovering cures for diseases or making technological advances which improve our economic or military status in the world. But resentment of these youngsters is also very strong throughout our society (Gallagher, 1986).

One analogy which may help to explain such negative feelings is to compare the gifted with those people who have inherited wealth. These persons have an advantage over the rest of us that they did not earn, or perhaps deserve. The "inherited wealth of high intelligence" strikes many people in the same vein. They see gifted students as those who, for some reason not justified by merit, have received an advantage in the academic world. Giving such youngsters special educational programs in the schools seems to many people akin to giving tax breaks to the rich—a violation of some rather basic tenet of equity. It is this negative emotional reaction that colors many persons' views of programs for gifted students.

The drive for excellence, therefore, which is spurred on by our national concerns for our society, bumps up against the feeling that it isn't fair to help those who already have so much. Many persons have pointed to the difference in our attitude toward athletics: the most talented athletes receive enormous help to develop their talents to the maximum (Gallagher, 1985).

**II. Educational Reform—Cooperative Learning**

One of the newest educational strategies to receive considerable attention is *cooperative learning*. This term encompasses a variety of techniques which bring together small groups of students with a specific goal and asks them to work together to achieve that goal. The students, instead of being on their own in the classroom or performing in a competitive fashion against the rest of the class, are placed in a small group where their achievement depends, in part, upon the performance of the rest of the members of the team, much as is true in athletics.

The group members are thus motivated to help each other and even teach their slower peers how to master some particular skill or bit of knowledge so as to make the team more productive. In this way, in a heterogeneous class, bright students could be distributed into separate groups so that they can be helpers for average or slow students, and also to even up the competing teams in the classroom.

One of the fates which awaits new educational methods and techniques is that they will be oversold, and people who are undertrained will try to adapt them to diverse purposes. That would seem to be what is currently facing the cooperative learning movement. As Slavin (1990), the originator of the method, complains, there is a danger that cooperative learning methods will be oversold and undertrained. He points out that:

> It is being promoted as an alternative to tracking and within class grouping, as a means of mainstreaming academically handicapped students, as a means of improving race relations in desegregated schools, as a solution to the problems of students at risk, as a means of increasing prosocial behavior among children, as well as a method for simply increasing the achievement of all students. (p.3).

This is the educational equivalent of using a screwdriver as a chisel and then complaining because it doesn't seem to be as good a tool as was originally thought. Those who use the method should be clear as to what instructional purpose is being served by its use instead of trying to use it as an all-purpose cure for various educational problems.

There is good reason to believe that the cooperative *learning* method is well suited to the changing needs of the American workplace. Few of the next generation of students will work in solo situations. Most of these students will be in a workplace where they will be teamed with other people to achieve some common purpose. This is just as true in science as it is in business. Most large scientific enterprises now involve teams of scientists instead of the single genius brooding alone in his/her laboratory.

Johnson and Johnson (1990) point out that the development of interpersonal skills through cooperative learning may be as important as academic content mastery. These results, too, depend upon careful training of the individual teacher in the methods to that goal. As they say,

> These (interpersonal) skills should be taught just as systematically as mathematics, social studies or any subject. Doing so requires that teachers communicate to students the need for social skills, define and model these skills, have students practice them over and over again, process how effectively students perform the skills, and ensure that students persevere until the skills are fully integrated into their behavioral repertoires. (p.32)

Isn't it odd that we spend 12 years in elementary school and secondary school admonishing students to "do your own work" and "don't let anyone else see your paper" and above all "never help other students on their exams" and then turn them loose into a society where they are expected to work in a socially cooperative fashion with others?

Slavin (1990) pointed out that in order for cooperative learning to achieve student achievement effects, two essential features must be present. One of these features is *goals* or positive interdependence. The cooperative groups must work together to earn recognition, grades, rewards, and other indicators of group success. Simply asking students to work together is not enough.

The second essential feature is *individual accountability*: the group's success must depend on the individual learning of all group members. For example, group success might depend on the individual learning of all group members where the total score of the group on a quiz would be the team performance or an evaluation of a report in which each group member contributed his or her own chapter. Newman and Thompson (1987) reported that

> The pattern of results supports the importance not only of a cooperative task structure but also of group rewards, of individual accountability, and probably of group competition as well. (p.12)

There would seem to be evidence that cooperative methods that incorporate group goals and individual accountability accelerate student learning on *basic skills* at the elementary and

middle school level. Our concern is whether such a device can be used to take the place of more extended conceptual learning that gifted students should be involved in. Is it being misused as an excuse for heterogeneous grouping in the middle schools or in elementary schools?

Robinson (1990), in an extensive critique of the use of cooperative learning with gifted students, points to a dearth of research evidence. Only 3 of 295 ERIC entries on cooperative learning refer to gifted. Robinson identified three specific problems with this approach: cooperative learning will limit instruction to grade level materials, will be presented at the pace of the grade level group, and will be evaluated on basic skill measures.

This is not to say that gifted students cannot profit from using the techniques of cooperative learning and learning both the joys and frustrations of a group working toward a common goal. Whether in a special class or a resource room or a regular classroom, the well-prepared teacher can use the cooperative learning method as one of a battery of techniques to build effective learning and cooperative work habits.

**III. Educational Reform—The Middle School**

One of the major developments in education over the past couple of decades has been the shift in many school systems from junior high schools to middle schools. There is some indication that more than half of the school systems in the country are currently following the middle school concept (George, 1988).

The focus of the middle school concept includes the following elements:

1. A strong affective component with teams of students and teachers organized to foster a sense of belonging.
2. An interdisciplinary focus on content.
3. A curriculum that emphasizes inquiry, exploration, discovery.
4. A schedule characterized by flexibility.

One of the other conceptual elements from the middle school that seems to have been added lately has been a movement from homogeneous grouping to heterogeneous grouping and the mainstreaming of all kinds of students with special needs, including gifted students (Lounsbury, 1988). Although the majority of middle schools in the United States apparently still group by ability in some academic subjects (George, 1988), the concern for social and personal development at the middle school level seems to take precedence over academic excellence.

The middle schools appear to be a major battleground between the sometimes conflicting goals and values of *equity* and *excellence*. There has been a concern that grouping or tracking would result in grouping together large numbers of low ability students who would suffer from low teacher expectations and possibly contagious nonacademic behavior. To counteract that possibility, heterogeneous grouping has been introduced in many systems.

The literature on grouping and tracking that is now used to support the heterogeneous middle school pattern is both immense and confusing. There are some substantial limitations on that literature, however. One of the most authoritative reviews of the literature on ability grouping has been presented by Slavin (1988). The results of his review are widely quoted as supporting limited ability grouping and identifying only the top level gifted students as possibly profiting from tracking or grouping (e.g., George, 1988). But Slavin didn't include special programs for gifted students in his review on the elementary school!

> This excludes studies of special classes for the gifted and for low achievers. Gifted and special education programs may be conceived of as one form of ability grouping, and they also involve many other changes in curriculum, class size, resources and goals that make them fundamentally different from comprehensive ability grouping plans. (p.297)

Perhaps the most significant aspect of Slavin's review (1988) is his comment on what is lacking in these studies on tracking or grouping.

> Experimental studies of ability grouping typically lack adequate descriptive information on what teachers in contrasting grouping arrangements are actually doing. It is unlikely that grouping plans have a direct effect on achievement; whatever effects are seen must be due to changes in teachers' instructional practices; yet these changes and their consequences are poorly understood at present. (p. 329)

The problem is that "grouping by ability" appears to be bad for low achieving students, creating a critical mass of discouragement, but good for high achieving students. What to do? Since there is a paucity of evidence regarding the impact of middle schools on various subgroups, one is forced to rely upon experience and expert testimony. An unselected sixth grade would likely include students performing at ninth grade level or higher in academic subjects and also some students performing at the fourth grade level or lower.

The ability of a single teacher to cope with

such diverse performance is doubtful, particularly without considerable special training. Many teachers may end up teaching three separate classes of students within a single room and calling it one classroom. The potential for gifted students being further delayed in their academic development by participating in these middle school programs seems very real and should be a major concern to those who formed the "excellence" movement only six years ago.

There is no specific reason why special programming for gifted students cannot form a component of the middle schools program. Honors courses, independent study, magnet schools, and other well-established programs do not have to be abandoned merely to establish the middle school concept (Sicola, 1990).

George (1988) raises the interesting question as to why grouping continues to be used even the "lack of evidence" (from his perspective) for the practice. He considers the major factor to be pushy parents!

> The fact that this group of top students happens. . .to be composed of the sons and daughters of the most articulate and politically powerful adults in the community may have something to do with it. (p 26)

He also conceded, however, that heterogeneously grouped classes are more difficult for many teachers and that teachers appear to experience considerable difficulty planning and teaching classroom groups of widely varying ability and achievement levels. Indeed they do!

**IV. Educational Reform—The Master Teacher**

For many years now it has become apparent that classroom teachers have become surrounded by a battalion of experts on topics such as reading, learning disabilities, gifted, school psychology, curriculum, and so forth, ready to tell them what to do with their students. The classroom teacher receives little money or respect. The need for financial security has forced many excellent teachers out of the classroom and into a variety of administrative roles. The classroom teacher has become less of a factor than ever in the essential decision making that shapes education as a profession. To many persons this downgrading of the teacher was an inappropriate trend and one that should be reversed. Under the auspices of the Carnegie Corporation, a study was done that yielded several major recommendations that would amount to the greater empowerment of teachers (*A Nation Prepared*, Carnegie Corporation, 1987). One such recommendation suggested that there should be master teachers in the schools who could remain in the classroom but earn up to $70,000 a year and mentor other teachers instead of being stuck with administrative duties.

A second commission chaired by Jim Hunt, former governor of North Carolina, has been established to set national certification standards for these master teachers (Lathlaen, 1990). The commission itself is composed of a majority of classroom teachers. So far, so good. What has occurred now, though, is that they are currently considering whether there is such a thing as gifted education—something that would be a big surprise to the thousands of persons working in this field around the country.

It turns out that only one of the commission members has had any contact with programs for gifted, and she was chosen because she was one of the finalists for the NASA "teacher in space" program. The entire field of exceptional children has been treated in a similar manner, and it now has become a major task to try to "educate" these commission members about the special nature of students with special needs and the special instruction that comprises the field of exceptional children.

We in the education of gifted students are in danger again of disappearing into the mainstream at the same time that the mainstream is profiting from the special educational programs that have been operating for gifted students for many years. It seems that the educational mainstream has just caught up with the importance of teaching thinking processes to students, a cornerstone of educational programs for gifted since the middle 1960s (Feldhusen & Treffinger, 1985). As is the case of cooperative learning and the middle schools movement, there is adequate room for teachers of gifted students as a part of the master teacher movement.

The truth of the matter is that we learn a great deal from working with the extremes of the student populations, both slow learners and fast learners, that is important to the mainstream. It is out of gifted education that the emphasis on *problem finding* has come (Getzels, 1975); our growing sophistication about the development and measurement of intelligence and creativity owes much to our experience with gifted students. By working at the extremes of the student population, we find out many useful things about how to educate all students.

We have more than sufficient bad news regarding the performance of our students versus those of other countries in international studies of comparative achievement in science and mathematics (Gallagher, 1985). Such poor performance is also comparatively true of "our best students" versus "their best students." The trends noted here in the middle schools, cooperative learning, and master teacher movements tend to ignore the needs of gifted students and their teachers and would seem designed to make these problems worse unless they are counteracted. There is no rational basis for not incorporating the gifted programs in any of these innovations, but we are dealing with values, not facts.

In the end, it is not the schools or educators that drive broad educational policy. It is the public, and it is the public that will have to decide that our perilous status in international economic and technological competition demands that we put aside some of the old prejudices about gifted students and gifted education that come clanking after us like the chains on Marley's ghost.

**V. Educational Reform—Site-Based Management**

One of the strongest of the educational reforms involves the desire to return power and authority to the local school level. This "site-based manage-

ment" aims to empower teachers and principals to make the key decisions regarding children and programs rather than rely on policies developed in a central office, often far away, geographically and psychologically, from the educational process.

It is not hard to understand why such a policy would strike a responsive chord in many teachers who may have felt themselves unduly restricted by distant judgments and faceless leaders. However, site-based management, like the other reform, raises many different questions regarding how such a shift in policy would play out in operation.

There would continue to be obvious restrictions on the local school personnel, so it is the breadth of their freedom of decision making that is the real question. Obviously, the local school personnel could not do something that was against the law (such as deciding not to serve children with handicap conditions, for example). If there is a statewide testing program established by the state legislature, does the local school have the option not to participate? Can they choose to offer or not offer certain curriculum items? The crucial issue is what decisions will be made at the local school level under "site-based management" that were not made there before. This is a particularly relevant question for students with special needs who have not always thrived under policies of local decision making. What happens to students with special needs? What about support services that are district-wide such as psychological services or counseling? Can such an approach lead to a magnet-school arrangement? To what extent are individual schools expected to coordinate their efforts with other schools in the system? One way to look at this situation is to think of a district-wide policy designed for gifted students in which each local school has the option to implement the idea in various ways. That is, some form of grouping by achievement might be accepted as a way to challenge gifted students, but in one school it could take the form of in-class grouping, in another school it might mean after-school programs, and in still another it might mean a resource room program.

In the end, this administrative strategy of site-based management will be judged by its products and accountability. In that regard, each school will be faced with the problems that all schools face in assessing programs for gifted students.

**VI. Educational Reform—Accountability**

The term *accountability* can strike fear in the hearts of educators. They know what most well-educated citizens do not. That is, the school is not the most powerful force influencing the achievement of school children, not by a long shot.

There are at least three other variables that would seem to have more influence on student outcome than the school: (a) the students' own abilities and aptitudes, (b) the attitude of the family to education, and (c) the cultural milieu in which the student lives.

Each student comes to the school with abilities and aptitudes that will largely determine the level of the child's performance, regardless of the instructional strategies used. Students who are identified as gifted will be generally superior in most academic areas and will likely remain so, even if the instruction that they receive is mediocre or worse. Students who are mentally retarded will perform below the average student and will continue to do so even with the most brilliant instructional program that they could experience (Kirk & Gallagher, 1989).

The importance of the child's motivation to achieve in education and exercise of special effort to achieve appears to rely heavily on the family and family values. Given a strong drive to achieve inculcated by the family, even a less than satisfactory educational setting will not deter such students. One only has to observe that the discredited education procedures in Japan and Taiwan and Korea (group recitation, classes of 50 or 60 children, no differentiation of instruction for individual differences, etc.) still do not keep many eager and highly motivated students from learning.

Finally, the child is heavily influenced by the cultural background in which he/she exists. If the cultural values are against girls being scholars, that influence will have a heavy impact on the performance of girls regardless of the attitude or programs of the schools. Similarly, a cultural value that stresses learning as important can be a strong positive force. This is not to say that education and the schools are not a factor in the student's eventual performance. Teachers can inspire, content can intrigue, and the setting can be conducive to pursuing learning. Such conditions should be valued and can be measured, but even the best schools can rarely overcome strong negative forces in the dimensions of individual abilities, family interests, and cul-

tural values. That is what worries educators about accountability. They know that poor performance by the students will be blamed on the schools, not on the aptitudes of the students or the interests of the family or the attitude of the cultural group that the child identifies with.

**Gifted Accountability**

Much of the literature trying to evaluate special programs for gifted students has fallen short because of a variety of design problems (Callahan & Caldwell, 1986).

1. The use of standard achievement tests in such evaluation studies will not reveal the true achievement of gifted students because of the ceiling effects, since gifted students often perform at the limits of the test, even in pretest circumstances.
2. The use of standard measures will not reveal the mastery of specialized content that is at the heart of the special programs for gifted students. If they are learning the elements of the new physics of *Chaos*, where are the measuring instruments that will credit that mastery?
3. Many of the special education programs for gifted students focus on the development of special skills in the domain of productive thinking. Few evaluation efforts have included any type of measure (tests or product evaluation) to assess gains in this area.
4. Few evaluation programs comparing regular versus special programs have used the personal perceptions of gifted students, or teachers or parents for that matter. There are strong indications from informal comments of the students' excruciating boredom with regular education programs where the pace and level of the class activities do not challenge the abilities of such students.

Despite all of these limitations, those evaluation reports which focus upon gifted students still show gains in favor of the special programs, which, given the above shortcomings, must be a doubly significant result (Kulik & Kulik, 1982).

**Recommendations for Actipn**

It should be clear from the above discussion that many actions of significance are taking place in American education with little or no input from our special field of education of gifted students. The question is, what should educators of gifted students do about it? Certainly one move should be to adopt a deliberate strategy of communicating our accomplishments and contributions beyond the narrow confines of our own group.

We could establish committees or task forces whose responsibility would be to open new avenues of communication with our colleagues in other dimensions of education and with the general public. The members of this task force would write, or cause to have written articles for *Educational Leadership, Elementary School Journal, Educational Researcher* and so forth that would reflect accurate knowledge about gifted students and the impact that various programs may have upon them. They might also share some of our own ideas about improving education based upon our experiences with these special students.

The popular media are also interested in putting articles before the public but apparently have few ideas about how to contact key members of the field who might be able to bring credibility to these pieces in *Parade* magazine, *New York Times Magazine, The New Republic*, and so forth. This task force could collect names of those who could be contacted on various topics.

The major journals in the field might open an "exchange of papers" department whereby they would publish jointly with other journals, reprint articles previously printed in other journals, or encourage other journals to reprint some appropriate works that have appeared in our own journals that would be of interest to other professionals.

It would seem important for those interested in the education of gifted students to be proactive in response to these educational reforms. We should not wait for them to cause problems for the education of gifted students before we act; we should be actively involved in showing the essential compatibility between the best of such reforms and quality education for gifted students.

*A complete list of references for this article may be obtained by contacting the* Communicator *editor.*

**James J. Gallagher may be reached at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.**

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# Communicator

# Identification

## We Know They Are Out There - Finding the Gifted Among Hispanic Students

by PAT PHELAN

The focus of this discussion is on procedures developed in our district for identifying gifted Hispanic students. This task has our highest priority because there are so many Hispanic students enrolled in the district and, until the last few years, so few identified as gifted and talented. To place this discussion in context, information about the Santa Ana Unified School District and about our formal procedures for identifying GATE students is presented first.

### Some Demographics

Seventeen out of every twenty students who come to our district schools are Hispanic. Fourteen of these seventeen students have limited proficiency in the English language. About one out of twenty-five will receive some kind of service from the GATE program.

Out of a district K-12 enrollment of 49,000, there are 2,000 identified GATE students. Out of 42,000 Hispanic students, 1,000 are identified gifted and another 700 participate in a program for unidentified students who show high learning potential. Thus, identified gifted students are 4% of the total district enrollment. Identified gifted Hispanic students are 2% of the district enrollment. They are 2.4% of the district Hispanic enrollment.

While the district population is 86% Hispanic, the GATE population is 50% Hispanic. This figure of 50% results from a special effort over the last twelve years to identify Hispanic students. Twelve years ago, the GATE population was about 25% Hispanic. Even the 50% figure does not adequately reflect current results in increasing Hispanic representation in the GATE program.

Looking at what has been accomplished from the beginning of this school year to the present time gives a far different picture. Since July 1, 1993, 422 students have been considered for GATE identification. Out of these students, 336 (80%) were identified either temporarily or permanently. Out of the 243 Hispanic students considered, 189 (78%) were identified either temporarily or permanently.

In contrast to the Hispanic population, all other ethnic groups show a higher percentage of representation in the GATE program than they do in the district population. To begin with, 50% of identified GATE students come from non-Hispanic ethnic groups that combine to total 14% of the district population. As might be expected, non-Hispanic White and Asian students are significantly overrepresented. The percentage of identified African-American students exceeds that of African-American students in the district population. This situation is not remarkable because there are only 700 African-American students in the district. To match the percentage of identified African-Americans with their percentage of district enrollment, we would only need to identify a dozen students. For what it's worth, we have identified over four times that number using formal GATE identification procedures.

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# CALENDAR

July 21–23, 1994
**Supporting Emotional Needs of Gifted (SENG) Annual Conference**, San Diego, CA
CAG takes pleasure in cosponsoring this national conference for parents, teachers, psychologists, and other professionals. The conference focus will be on social and emotional issues in parenting and teaching gifted and creative children with presentations on motivation, stress, perfectionism, depression, ADHD and the challenges peculiar to minority students.

SENG presenters are always well-known experts in the fields of education and psychology. And that includes our own former CAG president and current treasurer Judith Roseberry whose presentation at the SENG conference is entitled "How to Live Successfully With Your Gifted Youngster," scheduled for 2 p.m., July 21.

CAG members will remember SENG Director James T. Webb, Ph.D., from his recent presentation on motivation at the CAG conference in Palm Springs. Dr. Webb is a professor in the School of Professional Psychology at Wright State University in Dayton, Ohio, and a favorite presenter at CAG conferences.

Full conference cost is $160 for early registrants (before 6/24/94), and $190 thereafter, with lower rates for persons attending one day only. Spouse and student discounts are available, as well as a special program for accompanying children (grades 1–9) which costs $130. For more details and registration materials, contact Leona Gray, Conference Chair, Ellis Human Development Institute, Dayton, OH, 513/873-4300. Or FAX your request to 513/873-4323.

July 26–28, 1994
**Great Explorations in Math and Science (GEMS) Workshop,** Lawrence Hall of Science, University of California, Berkeley
Three-day workshop leading to a GEMS Associate Certificate for persons interested in being an active provider of GEMS workshops to teachers. For details, call 510/642-7771.


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CAG encourages all interested parties to submit articles for publication. All submissions will be given careful consideration. Photos and camera-ready art work are particularly desirable. Student work should be accompanied by teacher's name and school. Send all material with your name, address, and phone number to Jean Drum, *Communicator* Editor, 7822 Belgrave Avenue, Garden Grove, CA 92641. You may phone Ms. Drum at 714/892-1745.

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## PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

# Identifying Ideas and People

by SANDRA KAPLAN

The theme of this issue is "Identification." It provides an appropriate opportunity to identify ideas and people—past, present, and future—important to the association and gifted education.

### Identification and Gifted Education

It always is a concern when more emphasis is placed on *how* students are selected for participation in a gifted program than *what* students are provided within the gifted program. A sign of the times has been the debates over *who* is gifted. From these debates has emerged a new set of rules that govern the identification process:

**Rule 1** - The identification process is an imperfect system that needs constant revamping with reference to current knowledge about students and how they learn, and the validity of assessment methods.

**Rule 2** - The student should no longer be a *passive* participant in the identification process. Today's identification procedures demand the *active* involvement of students in the collection and assessment of evidence that best shows their abilities and interests.

**Rule 3** - The identification process traditionally was seen as an end in itself or the entry to a program wherein students continually had to *prove* their giftedness. Today, the identification process is a means to an end or the entry to a program wherein students continually are expected to *improve* their giftedness.

**Rule 4** - Identification is no longer a quantitative or statistical number. Today the identification process is described qualitatively by the behaviors and needs of learners.

**Rule 5** - Most importantly, the identification process defines opportunities to learn appropriately rather than privileges for academic or social experiences.

### Identification and the Association

Leadership positions provide vantage points to identify opportunities and inhibitions or the factors that facilitate or hinder the association's abilities to fulfill its mission. For me and others who will be leaving our offices as leaders of the association, these are very identifiable.

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- Professionalism is a much discussed item in today's educational lexicon. As more and more educators assume more and more responsibilities, time for volunteer work in professional associations diminishes. Time for participation as a volunteer in a professional association must become a negotiable item of a working professional if our endeavors to support educational causes are to continue.
- The relationship of a special interest group like CAG to the interests of general education must reach a productive balance. The acknowledged interdependence between the needs of gifted and general education students is crucial to the success of the population CAG services.
- The need to be responsive to changing times, to refine our concerns for gifted students is paramount. Our mission can remain static; the means to fulfill it need to be fluid.

**Identification and the Future**

The Board of Directors has identified the future for the association in a five-year plan—a plan that is perceived as responding to you, our members, while simultaneously moving toward the goals upheld by the association. This plan includes the following:

**Professional Development**

- Conducting parent seminars on how to assess quality services for the gifted in your school or district.
- Creating a subject matter focus to promote foreign language for GATE students.
- Developing networks of interests related to gifted education between and among schools within the state.
- Continuing teacher institutes across the state and the Certificate of Completion program.
- Disseminating new publications for teachers of the gifted and about at-risk gifted students.

**Projects with the California Department of Education**

- Continuing development of more sophisticated strategies to differentiate the core curriculum: depth, complexity, novelty, acceleration.
- Articulating the language, instructional strategies and curriculum necessary to help students attain a "6" on a rubric related to standards.

**Advocacy**

- Providing more frequent updates on legislative activities.
- Developing parent support groups representing the cultural diversity of our state.

**Identification of People**

Most of our members do not see the Board of Directors at work or hear the discussions that go into the business of CAG. This is a time to identify the people who have worked relentlessly for CAG. If you were to attend a board meeting you could hear and see:

- The quiet contemplation of Kathy Hope, Marjorie Bowles, Emelie Neher, Sue Benzinger, Ceil Wiegand, and Ada Dodd-Vivier.
- The exhuberant participation of Pat Paluso, Dana Reupert, Victoria Steinitz, Janet Lamarre, Karen Grinfeld.
- The continual probing of ideas by Pat Phelan, Bonnie Casassa, Robin Hubbard, Janet Ward, Terrie Gray and Dave Hermanson.
- The suggestions and concern rendered by Margaret Gosfield, Sharon Freitas, Anita Still, Ann Cierley, Barbara Clark, Martha Flournoy, and Jean Drum.
- The diligence of Barry and Leslie Ziff, Bruce DeVries, Sharon Russell, Barbara Nelson and Ray Simpson for the work they have done for CAG kids.
- The ever-present support of the Executive Committee to further the agenda - Judy Roseberry, Vera Eby, Cathy Silva, and Ron Fontaine.
- The work of Carol Brown Spencer and Sharon Mountford that has made the association "move," so to speak.

**Identification and Thanks**

Most of all, I want to extend my sincere appreciation for the opportunity to have been able to serve the association as president and identify what the board has tried to accomplish.

- We have tried to work productively with the Department of Education.
- We have tried to define new meanings of differentiation and to develop a common language and purpose to differentiate the core curriculum.
- We have tried to provide outreach services for educators, parents and students.
- We have continued to advocate for quality education for all California's youth as well as to support education for gifted students.
- We have tried to identify our vision and leave it as a legacy for others to pursue.

# Above and Beyond Identification

by JEAN DRUM, Editor

Identification is only the beginning when we are considering successful participation in a gifted program, especially when we're working with children who find mainstream American culture a challenge. It is absolutely imperative that we never lose sight of this fact if we are to have gifted programs that are representative of our society and reflect our ideals.

It may be helpful to begin by taking a look at the term "mainstream American culture." This culture is primarily European in its traditions and has generally been accepted by the economic middle class. This is what the early immigrants brought with them and what they accepted as the norm. Africans were also early immigrants, but they were not permitted to become a part of the general culture nor was their culture allowed to permeate general thought to any great extent. As Americans moved West and as many more immigrants arrived later in the 19th century, including those who were not (yet, anyway) middle class, these cultural expectations remain unchallenged, and it is on these expectations that our educational system is still largely based. This basis made perfect sense to people a century ago. If children did not do well in school, it was the children, not the school, who needed to do the changing.

Now new winds are blowing through the locker-lined halls of academe, and those of us concerned with the education of gifted youngsters have had to do a lot of thinking. The indisputable fact is that children who are not from the mainstream culture do not seem to be successful in scoring well enough on the traditional tests to be included in gifted programs. Since it makes no sense to assume that only mainstream children are smart, it was decided that the tests themselves were flawed and culture-bound, and that we needed to find other ways of identifying children with high ability. A number of creative solutions have emerged (several of which you can read about in this issue) and we are indeed finding children with superior school ability who would probably have been overlooked a decade ago.

So far, so good. But remember, it's not only the tests that have been based on those mainstream cultural expectations, it's our whole educational system. It's not enough to *find* non-mainstream gifted children. We then must see that they are given the means to succeed in an educational system which, even with the new approaches that are gaining acceptance, is still basically mainstream. This does not imply any value judgement about whether this is desirable or is the best kind of education; it simply says that this is still pretty much what's happening out there.

To be successful and comfortable in school, children need good language facility, and since most GATE children are highly verbal, language is doubly important for success and comfort in a GATE class. A child with limited experience in English may find it a discouraging situation to be in a classroom of native English speakers who go home each day to engage in more English conversation, often with college-educated parents. It is important therefore to see that children who are identified as having high intellectual potential but who do not operate, at the moment, really well in English get a lot of additional help. This will almost have to be done outside of regular classroom hours, which of course makes it difficult and expensive, but the results would be well worth it. Involving the child's family is also important, since they need to see that improving the student's English does not mean denying the first language, but adding skills that will enrich the use of both languages. Classes to assist other family members to sharpen their English skills along with the GATE student would include the family in the student's GATE experience and create more comfortable acceptance. The advantages of being really bilingual should be stressed and made a thing to take pride in.

These students should be helped to make the public library their second home. Young children may need help in getting there and older children may need to become familiar with the library so that they feel at ease in using it. This too could become a project which would

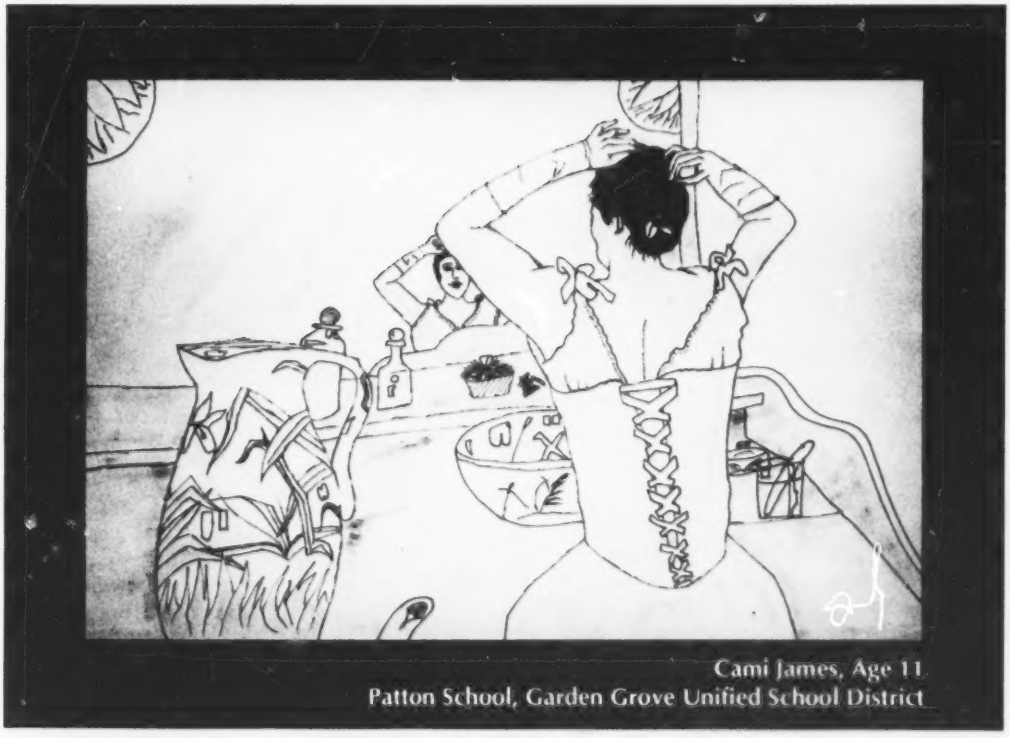
introduce whole families to the wonderful world of the library. What is needed are "library mentors" who would work with GATE students and their families.

GATE students whose dads are engineers and whose moms are teachers can get all the help with homework and research projects they need, but children from limited English homes or homes where the adults have not had the opportunity for advanced education, are at a disadvantage here. If our newly identified GATE students are to have an equal chance, they need the same kind of help with homework that their classmates have. One school which serves a large Hispanic population set up Escuelita, an afternoon program in which students at a nearby college volunteered time to help with homework. The children had access to books, supplies, and answers to their questions in a friendly and warm environment, and it was a great success. A program like this might even involve parents, who could come and learn with their children.

These students also need help in bringing together their GATE experience and their neighborhood life. Participation in a GATE program is sometimes seen as being "white" or a "schoolboy," and students may feel rejected by their friends or even their family. This is too much to ask of a child, and a prime task for educators of the gifted should be to find ways to ensure that these children can succeed in school and maintain acceptance by neighborhood and family.

It is also vital that the lines of communication between the school and the home be open, friendly and accepting. In this day of growing diversity in our schools, educators have been alerted to the cultural differences that can cause misunderstanding, but we need to remind ourselves often to be aware of these things. This is a two-way street, however, and we also need to be sure we let parents know what our expectations are. We can't assume that parents "just know" what we are doing in the classroom and what we expect their children to do. Thoughtful and thorough communication (with interpreters if necessary) can go a long way to prevent painful misunderstandings that leave a child caught in the middle and unable to take full advantage of participation in a GATE program.

GATE programs have been given a challenge, but when we meet it successfully, the result will be a rich talent pool that will serve the future well.



Cami James, Age 11
Patton School, Garden Grove Unified School District

# I Think He's Gifted, but is He Ready for Kindergarten?

by ROBIN L. HUBBARD

It's that time of year again when the call goes out from all of the school districts for parents to pre-register their four-year-olds and five-year-olds for kindergarten. Once again parents across the state are faced with the reality of starting their child's formal education. Along with this reality comes the question of whether or not the child is ready to start school.

In the state of California, any child who is five years of age by December 2nd is eligible to start kindergarten. Frequently parents with children who have fall birthdates are gently and subtly encouraged to keep those children out of school for another year. Such horrors as being the youngest in the class, being immature and not able to sit still, having a short attention span or poor fine motor skills are given out as reasons to keep a child out an extra year. If, God forbid, the child happens to be a boy, these reasons are given even more weight, because boys do tend to be developmentally several months behind girls at the ages of four and five.

This trend has slowed in some areas, but is still quite apparent in many. Some have called this an extension of the super-baby syndrome. Just as using flash cards in the bassinet was supposed to give the child a headstart, being the oldest or one of the oldest in a class should give that youngster an advantage over classmates who may be almost a full year younger. Some also use this as a subtle way of "red shirting" boys early in life, so that when they get to junior high and high school, they are larger, stronger and more able physically to play sports.

Over the past few years, since the release of the document *How They Come: Ready or Not!* by the California State Department of Education, some of the policies that made the starting of kindergarten so difficult have changed. As should be the case, the document reinforces the fact that rather than making the child fit the kindergarten, the kindergarten should fit the child. Chronological age is not truly an indicator of school success. Rather, how a child will do in school is a combination of many different factors. Among these are such issues as parental expectations and involvement, the developmental appropriateness of the kindergarten program, and the connection between the kindergarten program and the primary education at the school.

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) has long studied and reinforced the need for a developmentally appropriate curriculum for all children. This emphasis is based on the work of Piaget, Montessori and other experts in child development. Rather than a vessel to be filled with knowledge by the teacher in charge, young children should be seen as explorers who are discovering knowledge about their physical and social worlds. They should have the opportunity to interact with others their own age, with caring, supportive adults, and with the myriad materials of their worlds in an open and well organized setting.

Having this background, there still is the question of whether or not to start that son whose birthday is in October or November. Even parents of boys born in August or September are often undecided as to whether or not they should hold the child out a year. And, parents of boys are not the only ones concerned, although they tend to dominate the question. Parents of girls are also concerned and may hope to give them an edge academically and socially by keeping them out an extra year.

First and foremost, remember that someone always has to be the oldest in the class and someone has to be the youngest. Frequently, without a listing of birthdates, it is impossible to identify the youngest and oldest in any class. There are other factors that affect a child which may make a significant difference in that child's reaction to school.

The second important thing for a concerned parent to consider is the particular kindergarten program the child will be entering. Does the teacher have a sound background in Early Childhood Education or has the teacher had only general elementary training? Do the children sit in desks filling out worksheets and doing lots of "academic" work or is the program developmentally appropriate? How many children are retained (a practice frowned upon by the state and most early childhood practitioners). Is at least part of the day geared to the child explor-

ing his or her environment? Do the math program and science program allow for lots of hands-on activities or are they centered around workbooks and fine motor activities? Is language arts a series of phonetic worksheets and fill in the blanks, or is it part of a program that includes good literature being read to the students, memorizing poetry, rhymes, songs, journal keeping, writing centers, and lots of opportunity for the child to interact with print?

Parents of a child who is legally old enough to start kindergarten should request to visit the classroom their child will be entering. Ask the teacher for a conference to determine her or his philosophy. Talk with parents of children who are currently enrolled in the program. Also, read articles and books on what makes a sound kindergarten program.

Remember that by third grade, most of the advantages of keeping a child out of kindergarten a year are no longer evident. The child who has had a sound, developmentally appropriate program will adjust to school and do well. Often bright students who are held out a year actually become bored with work that is too easy for them and become behavior problems or else drop out mentally because they have caught up with their true agemates.

Another aspect to remember is that between April and the start of school in September, there are five months for growth and development. The child who does not appear ready in April may be more than ready in September.

As a kindergarten teacher I have seen very young six year olds and very mature four year olds. My classes always have at least a full year spread and frequently, as with this year, an eighteen month spread. Interestingly, the oldest student is a girl who is still shy and has difficulty separating from her mother, and the youngest is a girl whose birthdate is December 1st. Although also very shy and with poor motor skills at the beginning of the year, she is now solidly ready to go on to first grade.

### Readings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**Robin L. Hubbard teaches kindergarten at Pine Grove Elementary School in Crescent City, CA.**

## Yes, He Was Ready After All - A Parent Remembers

I was one of those parents who agonized over whether to send my October birthday son to kindergarten when he was legally eligible. I had all the worries that Robin Hubbard mentions in her article, and since my husband and I were both teachers, I wondered if we might be too anxious to have our child enter *our* world. Well, we did it. After all, he was technically old enough, his only friend in the neighborhood was going (an already five-year-old with a January birthday), and he seemed to like the idea. But I still worried.

Several months into the school year, I walked up to the school to visit the kindergarten to see what was going on. There he was, sitting on the rug, but on the very outside corner. Oh dear, I thought, he's not ready; he doesn't know how to socialize. Guilt flooded in. Then the teacher began to call the roll and expected each child to answer by saying, "I'm here and my address is . . . ." My son was the only one of the children who was able to do this straight off with no help. Well, I thought, guilt receding, maybe he is ready.

He stayed shy and quiet and on the corner of the rug, but he liked kindergarten and didn't seem to have trouble doing any of the activities. He was also the tallest child in the class. At the end of the year he got a perfect score on the reading readiness test, to the great surprise of the teacher who didn't "think he was that smart."

He was though, very smart, and when we watched him graduate from high school as valedictorian, tall, handsome, successful in several extracurricular areas (but still rather shy), we knew we had made the right decision. Of course, not all stories have such a happy ending, but successful kindergartners can come in many sizes and ages.

# Reexamining the Foundations of Giftedness

by RICHARD W. RONVIK

Long-term observers of the development of education for the gifted have been aware that the pendulum of popular support has swung not infrequently from one extreme to the other. Currently it is on its negative swing, being driven by the regular education initiative, some aspects of school reform, dishonest or incomplete presentations of grouping research, irresponsible claims for cooperative learning, legitimate concerns about equity, fears of elitism, budget constraints and most embarrassing of all, poorly constructed gifted programs.

This current swing of the pendulum is quite forceful and it would be ironic if it were weaknesses within gifted programs themselves, rather than outside forces, that brought the entire framework crashing down. To say that an enormous number of gifted programs in the country today are based upon weak underpinnings would be to grant them a courteous understatement.

### Inclusion Versus Exclusion

To begin with, many program developers are still struggling with the issue of whether to be more exclusive or inclusive in their identification and selection procedures for gifted programs. Those who think of selection procedures in either context are already off the track. The students who should be in gifted programs are those whose mental abilities are advanced to the degree that the regular school program simply does not meet their needs; anything else is politics.

Those who think "exclusive" are aligned with the old-line gatekeepers who demanded that a student have an IQ of 132 to be declared "gifted" and therefore eligible for various rights and privileges. This view was not helpful to the highly able student who missed the magic cutoff but was well beyond the ability of his or her classmates and did require a differentiated program.

Those who think "inclusive" are usually from either the well-meaning set that always harbored secret guilt feelings about whether gifted programs fostered elitism, or from the cynical set that knew it would not be lucrative to market a model designed for a very limited population. We have never quite recovered from the inordinate time and money and effort lost in pursuing programs built on these misconceptions.

One of the earliest, and most extreme, of the inclusion models was Calvin Taylor's Talent Totem Pole Model (Taylor, 1968) which identified children in some half a dozen areas including "wisdom," "planning" and "forecasting"; and was built on the concept that if you tested children in enough areas, almost everyone could carry the label of "gifted" in something. As a diagnostic tool for the regular classroom teacher it may have been useful, but as a gifted program model it failed because it simply delayed meaningful program development.

A more seriously disturbing model, because of its popularity, is Joseph Renzulli's (1977) Enrichment Triad Model with its concomitant triadic identification system. "Task commitment" is simply not a strong criterion for program entrance because motivating students is also part of a school's responsibility and good teachers do it all the time. "Creativity" may have relatively low relevance for a student whose intellectual needs are not being met in elementary school mathematics. And "above average ability" or 51st percentile aptitude compromises the credibility of the term "gifted" and contributes to the trivialization of serious gifted education.

The best one could do would be to scrap the irrelevant overlapping three circles of identification and implement the enrichment model for every student in the school. The model itself, with its various types of enrichment, and the way it can be scheduled into a school's program, is excellent and would probably be an asset to any school's program for students at all ability levels, including the gifted. The danger is in believing that part-time, "revolving-door" projects-based, resource-room type programs are comprehensive differentiated programs for the gifted.

Gifted program developers became interested in a different type of inclusion some years ago with the introduction of the concept of "multiple intelligences." Suddenly, there were new audiences to consider which might help to dispel accusations of serving an elite few. What seemed to be forgotten, however, was the fact that the "intelligences" related to traditional school tasks were not being at all well served in gifted programs.

Howard Gardner (1983) says on the opening

page of his book, *Frames of Mind*: "...the score on an intelligence test does predict one's ability to handle school subjects, though it foretells little of success in later life." (p.3)

That may well be, but for those of us who are employees of schools, it is in school subjects that we are expected to work, and it is in school subjects that parents of gifted children expect us to develop comprehensive and differentiated programs.

There are some signs of the "inclusion" concept in the recent trend to scrap the term "gifted" and replace it with the term "talented" and then direct efforts toward "talent development"—a sort of "create your own gifted child" model. The loss of the term "gifted" would probably cause little pain, but there is a problem in replacing it with the term "talented." The problem is that no one seems to know what it means, or perhaps more accurately, everyone seems to think it means something else. The lay opinion is that it has something to do with the arts; the school administrator's position seems to hold that it is an ability level just a shade less than gifted; the gifted program practitioner's view seems to hold that it is a specific aptitude (in contrast to "giftedness," which is general intellectual ability). The most elegant view is held by Francoys Gagne (1991) of Quebec who hopes we will accept that talent is a human activity or developed abilities while giftedness is human aptitude or natural abilities. Even if everyone promised not to bicker about the definition, there would seem to be no point in jumping to a new term that has no universally accepted definition.

Many of these attempts at "inclusion" received their impetus from a desire to eliminate any hint of elitism; ironically, they were instrumental in making the case for legitimate charges of that very flaw. For in casting the net ever wider, many students were included in gifted programs who did not really require special programming since they were already sufficiently challenged in the regular school program. As the enthusiasm for inclusion spread, the program offerings that followed shifted further away from the major academic curriculum areas; and it became questionable as to why any children should be excluded from these special offerings. In fact, this expanded group became the first true elitists in gifted education because there was no philosophical rationale for including only them. Their programs had become preferential rather than differentiated.

### Relevance

When legislation for gifted education became popular in the '50s and '60s, a major error was committed which will have implications for gifted programs to the year 2000. Eager to be recognized at all, gifted educators accepted the role of the gifted program as an "extra" in the larger context of schooling. Since full-time gifted programming in the major curricular areas was administratively difficult, even when the children required such services, program developers instead proposed "add-on" classes, resource room pull-outs, independent learning, and special projects. Some of these programs seemed to work rather well: the students enjoyed the change, the teachers liked working with a selected group, the parents were proud that their children had been identified as "gifted," and administrators were happy that the publicity was positive and the whole thing required few scheduling headaches.

But highly able students were still sitting in their regular fifth grade math classes agonizing over the slow pace of instruction while their less able peers struggled with their lessons; and precocious first graders who could read fluently with animation sat stunned while their classmates stood one at a time to read, haltingly, strings of isolated words. These same children were then collected once or twice a week and brought to a resource room where they could learn about dinosaurs or work on "brain teasers" or write "what-if" exercises or work in their critical thinking booklets.

The programs were neither substantive nor connected in any real sense to the full-time academic program of the school. Gifted programs became part-time and irrelevant, and they have continued in large part to grow that way to this day. We have become so hardened to this irrelevance that we can adopt an identification/program model entitled "Revolving Door" with a straight face and not the hint of embarrassment.

Early legislation on gifted education should have required gifted program interventions to replace the regular curriculum and involve differentiated curriculum in the major academic areas in which each student was identified as gifted. When the legislation did not so dictate, then gifted program administrators should have taken it upon themselves to do this anyway.

Cox, Danile and Boston (1985) presented the findings of the Richardson Study, cautioning against the continuation of the popular pull-out model for meeting the needs of gifted students. The field would have done well to take that advice.

### Differentiation

Probably the weakest structural support in the framework of gifted education is in the area of what has come to be called "differentiated education." Once the students have been selected by one means or another, and placed into one kind of educational setting or another, what exactly is to be done that is different, or differentiated from what is done with regular ability students in regular classes?

Here educators of the gifted sailed all over the educational map, like Columbus—always confident but never in quite the right place. In the early years it was differentiation through creativity, and program developers worked at this so diligently that creativity exercises became almost synonymous with gifted programs. Always restless, the focus moved on like a tornado ripping through divergent thinking, problem solving, problem creating, thinking skills, critical thinking, learning styles, discovery learning, and shared inquiry. There was, it seemed, no end to what could be called differentiation for the gifted; but in truth not one of the strategies came even close, for every

strategy that was temporarily embraced as the key to gifted differentiation was not only suitable, but absolutely necessary, for all students in all classes.

When the Taxonomy of Educational Objectives that had been categorized by Benjamin Bloom and his associates (1956) was loosed onto the field of gifted education, it seemed that the program developers had at last found their Grail. Noticing that knowledge, comprehension, and application were referred to as "lower levels," and analysis, synthesis, and evaluation as "higher levels," they reasoned naively that the "lower" levels had more to do with regular students and the "higher" levels had more to do with gifted students. So they inverted the levels of the taxonomy so that gifted students would spend inordinate amounts of time analyzing, synthesizing and evaluating that about which they had little knowledge or comprehension. Gifted program consultants across the country became the worst offenders in offering this taxonomy as differentiation for the gifted.

Another interesting idea set forth concerning differentiation was that gifted education should emphasize product development, where the child performs as does a practicing professional. Proponents of this idea contended that giftedness does not exist in a vacuum; it should be seen as linked to an observable end product. They also felt that gifted program activities should involve real life situations—working on community projects, writing actual letters rather than business letter exercises, producing actual radio programs, conducting actual interviews with senior citizens, etc. The five Type III enrichment goals that Renzulli (1977) considers uniquely appropriate for the gifted all deal with actual investigations of real problems, using raw data rather than reporting the conclusions of others, creating tangible products, and applying thinking processes to real situations rather than structured exercises.

The concept behind all of this seems to be that reality is only for the gifted. The major flaw in this view is that it is not only the gifted who do not exist in a vacuum. Every child, no matter what the ability level, should be involved with observable end products and real life situations and actual investigations and raw data. It is elitist beyond belief to offer activities of this type as differentiated education for gifted children. The separation of activities into real vs. hypothetical for gifted and regular students is artificial; it would force gifted children into privileged roles and it would withhold normal good teaching from regular ability students.

The latest fad in in-service workshops for differentiating curriculum for the gifted is to structure curriculum around major themes. Gifted program educators somehow got the notion that regular ability children should receive information in whatever way they always did, but gifted children should receive it grouped by "thematic threads" such as "challenge" or "conflict" or "patterns" or "exploration." There is not a scrap of evidence to indicate that this strategy has any more relevance for gifted students than it does for regular ability level students. In fact, if a person just wanted to be ornery, he or she could probably demonstrate that the thematic approach is better for regular ability level students since they might miss thematic connections unless these were pointed out; whereas, the gifted child might more easily make such connections no matter how the material was presented. Actually, it is just as silly to advocate one as the other since thematic teaching is simply an excellent teaching strategy that can be used in the proper place and time with students of all ability levels. As all of these "differentiated" activities, once the private domain of the gifted program teacher, are seen for what they actually are—good teaching techniques for all students—they will cross over into the regular classroom, separate provisions for the gifted will seem redundant, the pendulum will swing more vigorously and the framework of gifted education may come crashing down into an unfortunate heap.

We should have come to the conclusion by now that there is no curriculum per se, nor is there any method of teaching per se, that is suitable only for the gifted. The differentiation is in pacing and depth only. Gifted classes should take on the same subject matter as the school's regular program. However, these classes should be accelerated—that is, go faster and introduce subjects earlier than the regular program, and they should be enriched—that is, go into far greater depth and intensity than in the regular program.

The litmus test for good gifted programming was publicized by Milton Gold (1956) who highlighted a quote from *The Gifted Student: A Manual for Program Development:* "An educational program can be devised which does more adequately meet the basic demands of the gifted child's greater learning capacity and which on the whole being uniquely suited to the gifted is both unnecessary for and impossible of accomplishment by students of lesser ability." (Southern Regional Project for the Education of the Gifted, 1962, cited in Gold, 1965, p. 136.)

Programs of the type that Gold envisioned can be developed if we ensure that the philosophical underpinnings to support the program are in place. This requires that:

1. The students are identified as gifted through credible measures and it is clear that the child's educational needs would not be met in the regular classroom.
2. The gifted program parallels and is in place of the regular program.
3. The gifted program offerings are full time in the areas in which the student has been identified as gifted.
4. The gifted program groups gifted children full time or part time with their intellectual peers in accordance with the field research on grouping (Rogers, 1991).
5. The enrichment differentiation for gifted programs is focused on the degree of difficulty of the material and on the curriculum being studied in greater depth.
6. The acceleration differentiation for gifted programs is focused on the faster pace of classroom instruction and on the earlier introduction of various subject matter into the curriculum.

With gifted education suffering both threats from outside the field and weaknesses from within, we need to make some substantive changes in the way we view the education of gifted children. We must become more questioning of each model that is suggested as a provision for the gifted; we must develop a healthy skepticism of the "quick-fix" program designs that have proliferated in this field, and finally, we must require every workshop consultant, every conference presenter, every journal contributor to distinguish more carefully between that which is good teaching for all students and that which Gold (1965) reminds us is, "Uniquely suited to the gifted [and] is both unnecessary for and impossible of accomplishment by students of lesser ability."

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A complete list of references for this article may be obtained by contacting the *Communicator* editor.

# The Raven Progressive Matrices: A Key to Successful GATE Identification

by MARCIA GIJIOSIA

Traditionally, the vision of the gifted child has been one who was the first with a hand in the air waving at the teacher to answer the question, a child with a large vocabulary who knew how to use it and the student first to memorize the lengthy poem assigned to the class. A broader view of intelligence has now been introduced to include an array of skills and abilities.

Standing in the way of uncovering the giftedness in all populations has been a variety of issues. The first of these is the searching out and nomination of students to go through the assessment process. Teachers, the funnel through which most nominations occur, frequently are unable to recognize gifted traits in a wide range of ethnic groups. Lack of eye contact or the rarity with which the child raises his hand may turn the teacher away from assuming innate giftedness. San Diego City Schools (SDCS) has attempted to circumvent this problem by allowing anyone who has contact with the child, or the child himself, to refer the student for assessment. The psychologists with the district have also conducted inservices to acquaint teachers with traits that may be considered gifted in the dominant culture but not in others. Finally, a central nomination list is sent to each site that includes students in the upper 10 percent on the standardized achievement test administered each spring and students in the upper 50 percent from the traditionally underrepresented ethnic groups. This combination has allowed all populations to have equal access to the process to determine giftedness and to nominate students in numbers that reflect their presence within the district.

The next obstacle was the testing instrument itself. It was necessary to include a completely objective measure with the identification criteria. Traditionally, intelligence tests were biased towards white middle class students. Therefore, it was necessary to search out a method of uncovering the giftedness in all populations in the fairest way possible. After examining the process used in the past within the San Diego City School district, a Jacob Javits Gifted and Talented Education grant was applied for and won to help in the exploration of possible assessment methods to be used in the future. The head of the joint doctoral program in psychology, San Diego State and U.C. San Diego, Dr. Dennis Saccuzzo, headed the research team. Various aspects of giftedness were examined, including locus of control scales which indicated internal or external motivation. Information processing was another indicator, utilizing computers which offered neurological tests that determined how long a particular design needed to be flashed upon a screen to be recognized and remembered. Both of these possibilities were rejected in favor of the use of the Raven Progressive Matrices, especially after

the search through archival data (35,000 files) and the 52 pieces of comparative data pulled from each case were researched. The path kept leading back to the Raven.

The Raven was developed by John Raven in Great Britain in 1936 and until recently there had only been British norms available. Now the test has been renormed throughout the world, but extensively within the United States using various ethnic groups, socioeconomic levels and different geographical areas. It is a non-reading test of cognitive processing skills. It does not depend upon past experience or knowledge but "teaches" the child the tasks as the test gets progressively more challenging. If the student is able to recognize the patterns in the simpler of the 60 item test, then he will "learn" to correctly respond as the level of difficulty increases.

The Raven Progressive Matrices is an intelligence test, but not the traditional sort. Tests, such as the Stanford-Binet or the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children III, assess what the child has been exposed to, both at home and at school, the size of the child's vocabulary or math achievement levels and what their strengths are with memorization. Other areas are also tested, but still utilize an experiential format. This is considered "crystallized" intelligence or *what a child has learned* up to that point. On the other hand, the Raven tests "fluid" intelligence or *how a child learns*. It has been determined that the Raven is the best and fairest measure of "g" presently available, "g" being Spearman's interpretation of general mental ability and its capability for predicting scholastic aptitude. In the Sacuzzo, Johnson, Guertin 1994 monograph, "Identifying Underrepresented Gifted and Talented Children: A Multifaceted Approach," it states: "Because the RPM (Raven Progressive Matrices) measures "g," it correlates with other measures of general intelligence including language abilities and reading, even though the RPM itself contains no language or reading problems. Moreover, because it does not involve reading, language, or other aspects of acquired, or crystallized intelligence, the Raven is a far better measure of pure potential than tests such as the WISC-R, whose scores depend heavily on acquired knowledge."

The monograph goes on to state that when correlating the WISC-R and Raven scores with the standardized achievement test given within the district, for both African-American and White students, the Raven was a better predictor of language achievement than the WISC-R Verbal, Performance or Full Scale scores. It further stated that this was probably "due to the Raven's ability to evaluate potential independent of past learning."

Some of the areas tested by the Raven include: alertness to visual detail, categorical thinking, conceptual reasoning, decoding, problem-solving skills, concentration, persistence, sequencing, non-verbal concept formation, synthesis and analysis, spatial perception and information-processing skills. What this finds is a child who is able to think and reason and not just memorize and regurgitate information.

Another positive aspect of the Raven is that it is given as a group so that several students may be assessed at one time. The children enjoy the initial discussion to introduce them to the methods one might use to be successful on the assessment. This is very different from the one-on-one situation where the child may feel as if he is put on the spot when unable to respond to a question or complete a task within the short time limit. And on that subject, it was decided by the SDCS psychologists that the Raven would be administered so that all children with different styles would not be penalized for working in a slow, methodical manner. They are encouraged to work more slowly and not consider it a race where by the first one completed is "the winner." After administering many thousands of Ravens, it has been observed that almost everyone finishes within the expected 45-minute time limit recommended by John Raven. But, by announcing the "untimed" method, the child's relaxed attitude and lack of concern for watching the clock allows a more reliable picture of their true potential.

Other studies have been conducted that indicate both sides of the brain are utilized in the process of analyzing the tasks. A child will work through his strengths, be they verbal or visual, to answer the questions. It is often easy to determine which children are particularly strong verbally as they talk to themselves throughout the test.

The results of several years of assessing with the Raven have elicited results so positive and in line with the district's needs that the instrument has been wholeheartedly embraced. It identifies the traditional highly verbal student and the high achiever, but it also uncovers giftedness in the many diverse ethnic populations. When compared to the years with the Wechsler used as the test of choice, the numbers of certified bilingual or bicultural students are easily doubled with the use of the Raven. In addition, the low achievers or poor readers with very high ability levels now have a chance to be discovered and challenged. One surprise has been several learning disabled students who have been newly-identified as gifted and are now able to be recognized under another, more positive label.

Standards have not been lowered, and expectations for all students remain high. Some children must transition slowly for a year or two to gain the skill for successful participation in the gifted classroom. The fabric of the new GATE classroom may now be made up of a variety of threads, calling upon teachers to expand the methods by which they enrich the core curriculum to challenge the gifted student. The needs of the gifted child may take on a broader perspective, but one that adds to the strength of the classroom. It is now quite clear that equal access for all gifted students into the gifted program is not just a theory, but a practice—one made possible by the Raven Progressive Matrices.

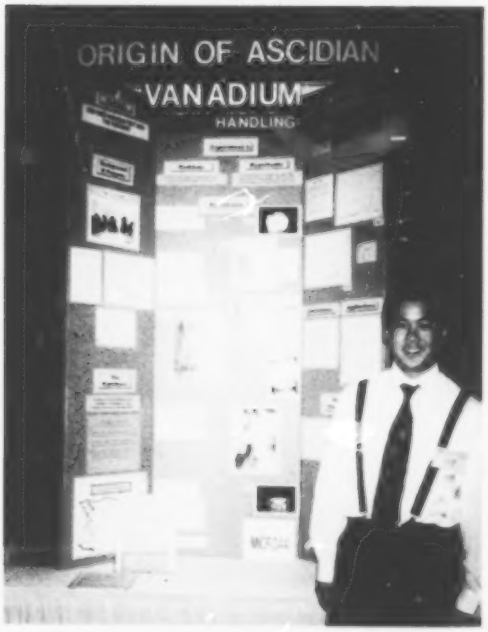
**Marcia DiJiosia is GATE Senior Psychologist for the San Diego City Schools.**

# Reports from the 1993 CAG Student Grant Recipients

Each year CAG awards grants to students to enable them to pursue projects or activities which show exceptional promise. This year's winners include Eddie Wu, Dean Short and Brian Minkin, as well as Vitto Catten and Chris Lux of Horace Mann Middle School in San Francisco

**Eddie Wu**, Los Gatos High School, Los Gatos, CA

Eddie is a senior at LGHS. His study is titled: Origin of Ascidian Vanadium; A Novel Vanadium-Binding Substance with Siderophore Properties in *Ascidia Nigra*. It has been discovered that the concentration of vanadium within the ascidian tunicate can reach levels of over four million times the vanadium concentration in seawater. It is currently unclear how vanadium is accumulated by the ascidian. The vanadium is concentrated within blood cells. A novel mechanism investigated in this study may aid in the explanation of how vanadium is incorporated from the surroundings and into the blood of ascidians. Applications of the experimental compound include using it to clean up bodies of water contaminated with high levels of heavy metals, alleviating heavy metal poisoning and in pharmaceuticals.




Eddie came across the mystery of vanadium in tunicates one day in a discussion with Dr. Roy Okuda at San Jose State University and brainstormed some ideas that may "solve" the mystery. The results are still preliminary, but there is a definite similarity between the compound known to concentrate iron and the experimental compound that may be involved in vanadium concentration. Dr. Okuda writes that Eddie is one of the most self-motivated students he has ever met, and that this has been entirely his own project.

Eddie is currently competing in the Junior Science and Humanities Symposium and at the International Science and Engineering Fair, and he will study Biomedical Engineering at Northwestern University and finish off with a medical degree at Northwestern. He enjoys science, music, computers and basketball, tennis, and skiing.

He used the grant money to supply much of the glassware and instrumentation used to carry out the experiment. He is donating the glassware to the school when the study is completed.

**Dean Short**, John F. Kennedy High School, Sacramento, CA

Dean will use his CAG grant to attend the Junior Statesmen summer school at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C. Last summer he attended the Stanford session of this program, where he took college level classes in Speech Communication and American Government. At Georgetown he will qualify to attend classes in United States Foreign Policy and Advanced Placement Economics. Dean says, "I feel I will benefit from this intensive course work and will in turn benefit my school with the leadership roles I

will assume as a senior. I have been in contact with the friends I met from all over the world at Stanford, and I hope to continue meeting young people with leadership interests similar to mine at Georgetown."

*(Stephanie Flournoy interviewed Brian Minkin and contributed this story.)*

**Brian Minkin,** Adolfo Camarillo High School, Camarillo, CA

In ninth grade, Brian Minkin began writing. He wrote a short story for a teacher in Missouri who encouraged him to pursue writing, telling him that he was very talented. Although now, upon reflection, he does not consider the poems and short stories that he wrote then to be very sophisticated, he does consider that time to be an important one in his life. Brian is now able, because of funding from CAG, to continue taking a course in Los Angeles with a prominent poet.

Born and raised in Camarillo, California(except for a few years in Missouri), he now attends Adolfo Camarillo High School in Camarillo. He dreams of becoming a poet, but he thinks in reality he will have a "normal job and write poetry on the side."

From Brian's point of view, true poetry is "natural" or writing poetry the way people talk. In his opinion, one cannot tell the reader something; one must show the reader what is happening. A poet must avoid overwriting a poem and just tell it from the heart. Brian relates that it tries to avoid bad poetry.

"You see, bad poetry is vague, with no details, no deep feeling, no expression of an experience, or there is no shock value to the poem or tears that come out of it. It's pretty much like a Hallmark card."

Brian has learned these concepts in the classes that he has been taking in Los Angeles. He is very pleased to be able to continue taking these lessons and to further his development as a young poet.

**Du'pars**
**over fries and coffee**

I'm gonna take this one,
she says,
lifting a single fry from my plate
to her palate.

But what of girls?
I ask,
as I sip some industrial-strength coffee.

Like a fickle fry,
she says—
I'm gonna take this one,
she says,
and lifts the fry off the plate.

No I'm not,
she says,
and sets it down.

Oh!
I say,
with that edible epiphany
being dropped back onto the plate—
so crispy and greasy and lightly salted.

And I lift it up into my mouth
and chew on it in my brain for a while,
as she grabs the fry and munches on it.

Why must I always be a fry?

*-Brian Minkin*

# Identification of Gifted/Talented Students: Transition in Texas

by JEANETTE COVINGTON

Public school districts in Texas have been required by law to identify and serve gifted/talented students in kindergarten through grade 12 since 1990. The task of identification is to find those students who, by virtue of outstanding mental abilities, are capable of high performance and demonstrate those abilities in such areas as general intellectual ability, specific subject matter aptitude, ability in creative and productive thinking, and leadership ability. These are students who require services that are not ordinarily provided in the regular educational program. In order to provide guidance and direction to the school districts in Texas, the State Board of Education adopted rules that were congruent with what was described in the literature as exemplary identification procedures. Rules require districts to use a minimum of five equally weighted criteria that represent both objective and subjective assessments. Prior to the mandate, it was not uncommon in Texas to find districts using a weighted matrix to identify gifted/talented students. In some instances, intelligence tests were heavily weighted, and achievement tests in others. Often teachers were afraid to trust their own professional judgment about the abilities and performance of students and wanted to rely heavily on standardized measures. Just as common, very small weights were given to information provided by parents.

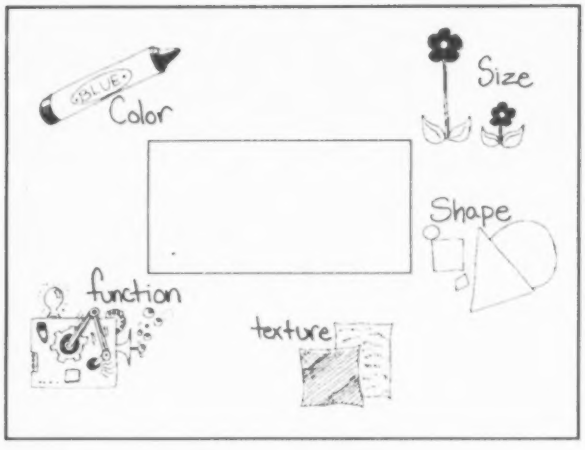
Another requirement of the State Board of Education rules is that final selection must be made by a committee of at least three local district educators who have received training in the area of gifted education. The intent of the rule is to empower the committee to make the best professional decision possible about the educational programming for students. Committees are allowed to make exceptions for students who do not meet district established cutoffs, if such cutoffs exist. Districts are encouraged to use a holistic approach to identification and not add up scores on a matrix or set rigid cutoff scores. The use of student profiles to display data is recommended.

Still a third requirement of rule is that the data and procedures used during the identification process are designed to assure that the population of the program for gifted students reflects the population of the district. To assist districts in achieving this rule, the Division of Gifted/Talented Education sponsored several projects designed to develop nontraditional assessment measures. The Texas Student Portfolio (TSP) was developed with assistance from Sandra Kaplan. Use of the TSP provides a "videotape" that reveals how students progress over time rather than offering a "snapshot" of student performance that a standardized test provides. To enhance the image, students may bring products from home as well as use products created in school. Products placed in the TSP provide meaningful information to selection committees. It is recommended that students select what they consider to be their very best work for the portfolios. They provide the reasoning behind their decision to place the product in the portfolio, and it is often that statement that is more revealing of their abilities than the product itself. The following eight descriptors are used to evaluate the portfolio:

- Unusual presentation of an idea
- Work advanced beyond age or grade level
- Complex or intricate presentation of an idea
- In-depth understanding of a problem or an idea
- Resourceful and/or clever use of materials
- Evidence of support of research for the idea
- Organized to communicate effectively
- Evidence of high interest and perseverance

Teachers are encouraged to actually teach the descriptors to the students and to modify lessons so that students have the opportunity to display their strengths. This is beneficial for obvious reasons and students have a right to know the criteria that will be used to evaluate their portfolios.

The Activity Placemats also were developed with assistance from Sandra Kaplan. The placemats may be used both as a tool for assessing a child's potential and as an instructional tool. Use of the placemats allows students to demonstrate behaviors often associated with




giftedness. The skills addressed include questioning, developing vocabulary, hypothesizing, developing multiple perspectives, planning, creativity, and relating. (Although primarily designed with young children in mind, teachers at all grade levels have indicated the usefulness of the placemats.) They are content-free and can, therefore, be used in any subject area and in any topical area of study. Placemats may be used with students whose native language is not English to stimulate language development through the encouragement of verbal responses. They can be used with individual students, with small groups, or for whole class instruction. The placemats offer the opportunity to give a student an assessment experience that most objective/standardized measures do not provide. If a student is unusually shy, rather than working with a group of other students, the teacher can sit with the student and work with the placemat. If a student seems to be more comfortable with an instructional aide, the teacher can show him or her how to use the placemats. Because most of the skill areas have several placemats, the student has multiple opportunities to reveal his or her abilities.

Recognizing the value of parental input in assessing the needs of students, brochures were developed in both English and Spanish to disseminate to parents and help them to recognize and celebrate talents their child may have. The word "gifted" is never used in the brochure. Because many parents may assume their child is not advanced, parents are asked to identify some important behaviors that educators will need to know as they make educational decisions for the child. Examples are provided of how children might exhibit the characteristics that are described and a "jot-down," adapted from the teacher "jot-down" designed by Sandra Kaplan, is provided for parents to remove from the brochure, put up on the refrigerator or some convenient location, and jot down evidences of the behaviors. The behaviors described are problem-solving ability, energy, reasoning ability, interest in adult issues, sensitivity, curiosity, originality, persistence, and enthusiasm.

Clearly, the transition in Texas is toward assessing student needs and then providing appropriate services. Currently, school districts are still required to include at least one objective or standardized measure in their procedures. The objective measure that is used is crucial in the identification or assessment process. Intelligence tests are frequently used and traditionally they have been verbal assessments. Many districts have made a transition here as well, moving to the use of nonverbal tests for students who may be limited English proficient or simply not be strong in verbal skills. Another area of transition in Texas is in the use of achievement tests. There has been a strong movement in general education in Texas away from using achievement tests. Most of the districts use achievement test scores as one of the five criteria to identify gifted/talented students. A recommendation that is frequently given to teachers of young students is to observe how students learn when placed in learning environments that are conducive to learning rather than basing educational decisions on what a student has achieved before he/she enters the learning establishment. The way students approach a task and rapid acquisition of skills and knowledge are indicators of potential giftedness.

School reform and restructuring issues frequently impact decisions made about assessment and services for advanced and gifted students. These issues need not pose problems for educators of the gifted. In nearly all discussions about school reform there is talk about improving the general school program and providing strategies commonly used only in programs for the gifted for all students. As educators of the gifted, we must applaud this and see it as an arena for students to demonstrate their unique abilities and skills. Thus students have more opportunities to exhibit those abilities and teachers are more cognizant of student needs for advanced services. The strategies now often referred to as "gifted strategies" were never intended to be only for gifted students. They are instructional strategies that were not commonly used by all educators in the past two decades and on which educators of the gifted focused their energies.

The intent of the mandate to identify and serve gifted/talented students in Texas has always been to assess the needs of students and provide services that would enable students to maximize their potential. It has taken some time to establish the concept of linking assessment and instruction and applying those principles. Identification can be quite time consuming and burdensome for both teachers and administrators. Ideally, educators in Texas will be spending less and less time on identification and more and more time on providing appropriately challenging opportunities for students. In this utopia, the transition will have been made from identification to performance-based assessment and linked to ongoing instruction.

**Jeanette Covington is the Education Specialist, Division of Gifted/Talented Education at the Texas Education Agency.**

# Traditional Identification: Elitist, Racist, Sexist? New Evidence

By ALEENE B. NIELSON

For many years, I scoffed at the statement that gifted children most often live in small, intact, economically advantaged families with well educated parents in urban or suburban communities. I knew better! The gifted students with whom I worked came from large and small families in a rural community, from all economic levels, and from minority groups at a greater representation than their ratio in the local population. Teachers of the gifted in other parts of my state agreed that the stereotype often did not fit their students either. Yet the family characteristics were mentioned in the literature so frequently, I concluded my home state was unique.

When a colleague mentioned that her fourteen-year-old daughter by a prior marriage, who consistently scored above the 95th percentile on standardized tests, had never been nominated by a teacher as potentially gifted, she wondered whether the difference in their surnames might be an inhibiting factor. I shared my concerns about the "typical profile" of gifted children and, after some exploration, we agreed to coauthor an article focused on gifted children in families impacted by divorce. Using gifted and divorce as descriptors, we found only six articles listed in *ERIC* and *Psychlit* databases between 1982-1991, three of them by the same researcher (Falk, 1987a, 1987b, 1987c). We broadened our search to older databases and classic studies of the families of gifted children in which we found bits and pieces of information about some family characteristics, such as educational attainment of parents, but little about family structure. What we did find, repeatedly, was a statement such as "Our data agree with Terman's."

Obviously, an examination of the research on gifted children conducted by Lewis Terman and his associates was essential. In the first volume of *Genetic Studies of Genius, Volume I: Mental and Physical Traits of a Thousand Gifted Children* (Terman, 1925), information about the methods and procedures used for selection is revealing. Terman designed the study and developed all the tests used to identify subjects. The *Stanford Revision of the Binet-Simon Scales* (Terman, 1916) used for individual testing, was normed on an all-white population of children in one small California city. The norms for the two group intelligence tests used for screening were based on restricted samples as well (Gould, 1981). Although Terman questioned the ability of teachers to recognize giftedness (Terman, 1916), he designed a teacher referral form asking for nominations of the two or three brightest children in a class and the youngest. (As grade placement by age was not as rigidly enforced at that time, the youngest child in a class often had been accelerated as a result of exceptional ability.) The children nominated were then tested, in groups of about 50, on the *National Intelligence Test* (Terman et al, 1920a). If a child's score on the group intelligence test was sufficiently high, a field assistant administered an "abbreviated Stanford-Binet test" (Terman, 1925, p. 23) to measure his or her intelligence quotient. Those children who earned an I.Q. score of 140, or more, were enrolled in a longitudinal study that, to date, has spanned more than seventy years. The *Terman Group Test of Mental Ability* (Terman, 1920b) and the *Stanford Achievement Test* (Terman, Kelly, and Ruch, 1923) also were used in the longitudinal research and, along with the *Stanford Binet*, set the standard for intelligence and achievement tests throughout the western world. How did one man gain so much influence in research on intelligence and what theories influenced him?

### Historical Background

When Terman began his research on precocious development in intelligence around 1900, two beliefs about giftedness or precocity were commonly reported. First, intelligence was hereditary and, in general, eminent individuals (or geniuses) came from distinguished families. Galton's (1869) *Hereditary Genius* and other studies of eminence, completed in the late 19th century, strongly influenced Terman's beliefs about intelligence. One of Galton's students, J.M. Cattell (1903), even developed a "scientific" measurement to calculate the eminence of historical figures and contemporary

scientists. This method was the basis of the selection of the individuals that Cox (1926) profiled in *Genetic studies of genius, Vol. II: The early mental traits of three hundred geniuses.*

A second belief was that prodigious intelligence or talent was followed inevitably by madness or early death. Noted doctors and theorists (e.g. Krafft-Ebing, Christian and Morel, Szijko, and Bouveret) strongly believed in the link between precocious development, concentrated study, and mental disorders (Terman, 1905). Cernej (cited in Terman, 1905) asserted that precocity is usually pathological and warned parents that early instruction for bright children often resulted in disease or dullness. Terman argued, however, that a difference existed between precocious development that occurred naturally and "prematurity" that was forced by parents or adults.

One other body of research that seems to have influenced Terman's views of intelligence is a paradigm now characterized as "scientific racism" (Chase, 1976). Several 19th century scientists, including Louis Agassiz, Paul Broca, and Samuel George Morton, theorized that differences in intelligence were due to gender and race (Shurkin, 1992). Agassiz posed a theory of "centers of creation" (Gould, 1981) and argued that as racial groups arose in different "centers," the various races were separate species. Not satisfied just to describe differences, however, he proposed a hierarchical ranking of the races with whites at the top of the ladder and blacks on the bottom rung (Gould, 1981).

Anders Retzius, a little-known Swedish scientist, published a "cephalic index" purporting to use a scientific system to measure the contours of human skulls and establish levels of intelligence in human beings. Broca, an excellent neuroanatomist, was fascinated by the work of Retzius and adapted the cephalic index as a tool for anthropologists. He also invented "the craniograph, the facial-angle goniometer, the occipital goniometer, and other measuring instruments of anthropometry" (Chase, 1976, p. 94). Broca claimed to be able to judge the qualities of individuals and entire races by cephalic index scores and claimed that women could not be as intelligent as men because their brains were smaller. The instruments and techniques developed by Broca were the basis for the anthropometric measurements used in one aspect of Terman's (1925) research on his gifted subjects.

Morton, a Philadelphia physician, also used skull size measurement in support of his theory that, as the brains of blacks were smaller than those of whites, major biological and intellectual differences existed between the two races. In pre-Civil War America, his views were welcomed by slave owners as a justification for their practices.

Although the theories of Agassiz, Broca, and Morton were challenged by some of their contemporaries, their work was generally respected and relied upon for many years. Scientists now know that both Broca and Morton 'doctored' their data to produce results that supported their theories (Chase, 1976), but the results of their 'scientific research' were still cited in texts of anthropology and psychology during the first half of the twentieth century and used as justification for laws and customs that discriminated against women and persons of color.

Based on these theoretical perspectives and his own experiences as a precocious boy in a rural school, Terman was fascinated with intellectual differences among people and, in spite of opposition from his mentor, persisted in the decision to present a study of genius and stupidity (Terman, 1906) as his doctoral dissertation. After hundreds of hours of research with fourteen boys, he concluded that the seven "bright" boys performed better on intellectual tasks and that the seven "stupid" boys generally performed better on physical tasks; however, he was dissatisfied with the methods he had used because they provided little basis from which to predict future achievement of the fourteen subjects. About this time, the *Binet-Simon Scales* for estimating the intelligence of children reached the United States and Terman was elated; he now had the "tool" that he needed to continue his research. In the next few years, he revised the *Binet-Simon Scales*, participated in the development of tests to assess aptitude of recruits for the U.S. Army, conducted (or directed) numerous small-scale research projects to standardize the various tests he and his colleagues developed at Stanford, and obtained a large grant to identify the 1000 brightest children in California.

### The Selection of Subjects

Although Terman's original intent was to survey all California school children, the limitations of funding and staff time restricted the search to Los Angeles, San Francisco, Berkeley, Oakland, and Alameda. Also, after initial testing of students in a few "poorer schools" without finding children with an I.Q. greater than 140 (Stanford-Binet), Terman advised the field assistants to restrict the search to "better schools" in higher-class neighborhoods. No schools for minority children were included in the search. Using these procedures, Terman and his assistants identified 643 children from 578 families, more than 99 percent white, in or near the five cities. In later years, Terman would report that children from all races were included in the study. In reality, the group was almost totally Caucasian. Among the grandparents and great-grandparents of the main group, only .6 percent were Japanese, .3 percent were Spanish, .1 percent were Negro, .1 percent were Indian, .1 percent were Mexican, and .1 percent were Syrian. Almost 80 percent of the main gifted group were of British or German origin.

The demographics of the families of gifted children in Terman's Group may have been an artifact of the advantaged populations sampled (Gould, 1981), yet Terman made broad generalizations about marital stability, family income, parents' educational attainment, national origin, race, ethnicity, birth order, gender ratio, and family size that are embedded firmly in the "typical" profile of a gifted child. Many of the currently used nomina-

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# TECHNET

## Easy Access, Easy Use, Easy Success: New Computer Tools for Kids by TERRIE GRAY

This issue's article focuses on technology in the home. With summer vacation merely days away—at least for those on a traditional schedule—many parents seek appropriate outlets for their little darlings' intellectual and playful energy. Well, Microsoft Corporation has created two products targeted for the home market that seem especially appealing. *FineArtist* and *Creative Writer* are astonishingly inexpensive (less than $40) paint and word processing programs designed for children from the ages of 8–14.

In evaluating these products, I considered the following questions, and *invite any of you who have favorite software to send me reviews based on this outline.*

1. Is it easy to use? Is it fun to use?
2. Is the manual helpful?
3. What age group would best benefit from it?
4. What are its strong and weak features?
5. How does it support the characteristic needs of gifted children?

### Review: *Fine Artist*

When the user starts the *Fine Artist* program, an animation appears showing a roller coaster-like approach to a colorful city: Imaginopolis. The child clicks to enter the city, then clicks the revolving doorway into the art gallery to begin creating. The appearance is whimsical and game like. In the lobby, the user chooses one of four "floors" to visit. Different activities take place on every level: the Drawing Tricks Floor for the "basics" and making pictures look "3-D"; the Project Floor to make comic strips, buttons, stickers, and picture shows (complete with sounds, motions, and words!); the Painting Studio to paint coloring-book-like drawings, or create original works from scratch; and the Gallery where children can arrange their paintings on the wall.

**1. Ease of use.** I conducted two tests in this category. At home, I gave the box containing the software to my seven-year-old daughter and said, "This software is really for you. Install and use it, then let me know what it can do." Since the installation contains child-friendly instructions, Molly had no trouble installing the program on our machine, and was running to me with samples of the "cool" things she could do within a quarter hour.

At school, I installed the program on a few machines and invited my seventh-grade students to spend a period or two "exploring" the program so that I could write this review. I told them I wasn't going to let them see the manual or give any directions. Most students had no trouble figuring out how to use the program. Those who did were able to get tips from someone at the next station and get right to work.

These tests indicate that the program is generally very easy to use. There is abundant on-screen help in the form of cartoon characters who give instructions in dialogue bubbles. To make full use of the program, however, referring to the colorful poster included with the software will be helpful.

The "fun" factor - I am pleased to report that my students were delighted with this program. Approximately 90 students of various ability levels and from diverse cultural backgrounds tested the software. As I walked around the classroom, students eagerly called me over to see what they were creating. One boy said "I could stay here forever!" Others were laughing as they recorded speeches for their cartoon characters. One student begged me to keep the room open after school so she could bring her friends by to see the program. A few asked if it could play on other computers; they wanted their parents to buy it, but didn't have Macs at home. (It *is* available in DOS format.)

**2. Documentation/manual.** The manual, printed in comic book layout covers the installation, configuration for printing, and a few troubleshooting questions. You probably won't even need to take it out of the shrink wrap. The poster contains information about what the

paint tools do and what can be created in each of the Imaginopolis floors. This will be the most useful guide. The teacher edition comes with a set of 32 task cards for classroom projects. Included in the box is a catalog of papers and activity books that can be purchased to provide additional ideas for projects.

**3. Age group.** The targeted age group is 8–14. The user must be an independent reader to use the software easily. I imagine the cartoon environment would become tiresome for older students. I notice that only my younger children use it at home. My teenagers use *SuperPaint* or *KidPix*. (These are also good programs; *SuperPaint* is about $100, and *KidPix* is less than $50. *SuperPaint* is more powerful and flexible and will work with EPS laser graphics. *KidPix* is for younger users and works with bitmapped graphics.)

**4. Features.** *Fine Artist* contains many easy-to-use features including clip art and animation galleries, 72 paintbrush styles, dozens of "wacky" sounds, and text shaping tools. The only drawback I see at this point is that it is bulky; it requires about 10 MB on the hard disk. What might be the most serious problem is that your children will want to print out their creations, and will pressure you to buy a color printer!!! Fortunately Imagewriters and ink jet printers are reasonably priced.

I was concerned that the sounds might be distracting in the classroom setting, but found that they weren't a problem: in a room of enthusiastic creators, the kids were making more noise than the computers—but they were happy noises.

**5. Benefits for gifted children.** In the home setting, *Fine Artist* provides a medium for creative exploration. This software, with its companion piece, *Creative Writer* changes the computer from an impersonal business tool into a friendly, inviting, manageable creativity tool. Because these are content-free software applications (rather than curriculum-based or single-objective), they can be shaped to fit the user's dreams and needs. There is no right or wrong answer; trying an idea out is "safe." Children with big ideas and limited motor skills can successfully make multimedia cartoons and illustrate stories with pictures and sounds.

In the classroom these tools foster joyful group collaboration. It was fun to watch the students plan out and produce their comic strips. It was rewarding to see my GATE students work intensely and in great detail, or boisterously using flamboyant screen colors and gestures.

### Review: *Creative Writer*

This software resides in the same folder as *Fine Artist*, and begins in the same way. Users just enter a different building to begin a story. The software provides inspiration in the form of Story Starters or Graphics to get ideas going. There are a variety of editing tools available, as well as templates for newsletters, flyers, and greeting cards. All comments listed in items 1 to 5 for *Fine Artist* generally apply to this software also, with the exception that the program seems to run slowly on a computer with only 4Mb of RAM. (Molly was the one who pointed this out to me, but she was used to our home computer which is more powerful than what we have at school.)

It is easy to recommend the use of these products: they meet goals I've mentioned in nearly every TechNet article—to make learning more independent, more individualized, more interactive, and more intuitive. They are easy enough to use so the children can focus on the *project* rather than on how to work the *machine*.

I hope this information helps you make software purchase decisions, and encourages you to send in your reviews. Please contact me at one of these e-mail addresses for more information or to submit a review:

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America Online—TerrieG
Applelink—tigre.edtech

Or you can call my voice mail at work: 916-896-9782, ext. 38

**Terrie Gray is a mentor teacher in Chico Unified School District and a California Department of Education Technology Fellow.**

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## The Formal Identification Process

**Referrals.** Most referrals come from classroom teachers on a GATE program referral form. We ask for the usual—name, grade, teacher, date of birth, address and name of the parent or guardian. We are particularly interested in the student's school history, standardized testing results, and language proficiency, and we ask that this information be photocopied from the student's cumulative record.

Elementary teachers are asked to submit representative samples of the student's work, the student's present reading level, and a comment about the student's reading ability in comparison to other children in the class. Teachers are also asked to comment on classroom behavior which shows advanced mental abilities. There is an optional opportunity to comment about any factors which may adversely affect test scores or quality of the work sample.

In place of student work and comments about reading ability, secondary academic subject teachers submit a "Work and Aptitude" form that is also used for Student Study Team and special education referrals. This form asks the teacher to complete a check list about behavior and attitude, provide the student's current report card grades, and make comments about the student's classroom performance.

Parent referrals received in the GATE office initiate a request for the teacher to complete a referral form. When teachers do not see evidence of giftedness, they are asked to just write "Parent Request" in the comments section of the referral form.

Self-referrals from secondary students have been received from time to time. These referrals are processed in the same manner as parent referrals.

**Assignment to Categories.** Referrals are received in the program director's office and assigned either directly to the Eligibility and Placement Committee for consideration under the "High Achievement" category or to the GATE school psychologist for IQ testing and consideration under the "Intellectual Ability" category.

**IQ Testing.** The *Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale: Fourth Edition (Binet-4)* is administered to all referred students. When a student whose second language is English does not show significantly high scores, the *Leiter International Performance Scale (Leiter)* is also administered. After testing, the referral information is checked for completeness and updated when necessary. The psychologist then writes a testing report, makes a recommendation about placement, and submits all referral and testing information to the Eligibility and Placement Committee.

**Eligibility and Placement Committee.** The committee is composed of three permanent members (the GATE Program Director, the GATE School Psychologist, and the GATE Elementary Curriculum Specialist), and two GATE teachers, one from the elementary program and one from the secondary program. Meetings are held monthly.

**Criteria for Placement.** Benchmark criteria for placement are strong teacher recommendations, evidence of giftedness from the student work sample (usually a writing sample), *Binet-4* IQ of 120 or above, *Leiter* IQ of 127 or above, and high standardized test scores. Standardized test criteria are scores at the 90th percentile or above on the Reading Comprehension or Math Concepts subtests over a three-year period. Our district administers both the CTBS-4 and the SABE tests on an annual basis. The SABE is administered to Hispanic students who are reading in Spanish language basal texts. Students from other ethnic groups who are limited in English proficiency (LEP) are taught from English language basal readers and are administered the CTBS-4.

Considering an individual referral, the committee may decide for or against placement in the GATE program. Where some benchmark criteria are met and others are not, the student may be temporarily placed in the program for one or two years and then reconsidered for permanent placement. Where a very few criteria are met, the committee will recommend against placement with a stipulation that the student be reconsidered in one or two years.

When students are reconsidered and found to be suited for the program, they are usually identified under the "High Achievement" category. Under very unusual, but not unheard of, circumstances, the student may be retested on the *Binet-4*.

Students referred under the "High Achievement" category are considered first, and most are placed permanently. If the committee does not identify a student, a decision is deferred until IQ testing is completed. After testing, the student is considered for placement under the "Intellectual" category.

Interpretation of student work is left to the professional judgment of the teachers who sit on the committee. Interestingly enough, el-

ementary and secondary teachers are almost always in agreement when they evaluate written samples from students at any grade level.

**Specific Academic Ability.** Beginning in the ninth grade, students may be placed in one or two GATE classes under this category. A site committee at each high school composed of at least three GATE teachers meets to place students. Separate forms and criteria are used and parent consent for screening is obtained.

The student must write 250 words about how he or she would benefit from instruction in a selected GATE class. Our district does not recognize giftedness in mathematics, believing that the student will be accelerated to higher math classes ending with calculus if the student has the ability. Thus, classes in English, Social Science, and Physical and Natural Science are the designated subjects for GATE placement. A site coordinator is responsible for this identification process.

### Gate Identification of Hispanic Students

**Special Criteria for LEP and FEP Students.** The difficulty in deciding about placement is the same for all students who have limited proficiency in English or who are fluent in both English and their native language. While the focus of this discussion is on Hispanic students, methods of score interpretation are the same for all students whose second language is English. Hispanic students who are native English speakers are not differentiated from other English speakers when considered for placement.

Most LEP and FEP students do not meet the benchmark criteria for placement under the "High Achievement" category. Their standardized test scores are evaluated in terms of direction or increase over a three-year period. Committee members look for annual growth that is greater than one year. There is a special concern about the difference between first and second grade scores because first grade scores on either standardized test tend to be spuriously high. Maintenance of scores above the 70th percentile from first to second grade indicates high achievement.

When students transition from Spanish reading to English reading, they

Javier Martinez, Age 11
Faylane School
Garden Grove Unified School District

Arturo Martinez, Age 11
Faylane School
Garden Grove Unified School District



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begin taking the CTBS-4 instead of the SABE. Scores are expected to drop from the Spanish language test to the English language test. When they remain at the 70th percentile or better, this is another indicator of high achievement.

Less frequently, there are bright children who achieve at very low levels at the first grade level and do much better in subsequent years. Some bright children never score much above the 50th percentile throughout elementary school. Their test performance during IQ testing often explains this occurrence in that these children are very careful and precise about their answers or they are very methodical in responding. Lower standardized test scores obtained by these children are indicators of perfectionism or a methodical and time-consuming response style rather than achievement. Some students are so afraid of failing that they cannot concentrate on the test items.

IQ testing is an important part of identifying LEP and FEP students because both their responses and the way they respond are evaluated individually. Students are allowed to respond to verbal items in either Spanish or English. Time constraint on responding is minimal because there is only one timed subtest in the entire battery. No extra credit is given for extremely quick responses as is the case with some other IQ tests.

In interpreting IQ test results, the least important score is the overall IQ score. The focus is on performance in three areas of reasoning: verbal, visual, and quantitative. As with the standardized achievement tests, selected subtests which require reasoning are analyzed. Interpretation is made easier by the fact that the *Binet-4* reports subtest scores in terms of little IQs. For example, a student may score below 100 (average) on the Vocabulary subtest while a score of 130 (gifted) is obtained on the Oral Comprehension subtest. Considering the quantitative reasoning cluster, lack of previous learning may depress one subtest score, while a more abstract measure of reasoning is in the gifted range. Conversely, memory items and the total cluster of memory scores may be significantly lower than scores in the different reasoning clusters.

Recently, a modified method of administration has been used for students who do not obtain high scores through the regular testing procedure. Modifications are translation of verbal items and directions into Spanish, elimination of some subtest scores in computing the IQ, and extending testing beyond the ceiling levels on other subtests. Because these procedures go beyond accepted procedure, a separate modified IQ score is reported.

When all is said and done, making one of four determinations becomes a relatively easy task for the committee. The referred student is judged on the total profile presented. This is not to say that there is uniform agreement, but there is usually a clear majority in the decision for or against placement.

Greater differences of opinion arise in deciding whether to make a temporary placement or to deny access and reconsider the student in the future. The decision often comes down to a question of where the student can best increase his or her skills in the English language. Knowing a student is bright does not alleviate the concern about whether or not the student has the English language skills to be successful in the program.

**High Potential Development Program.** HPDP is a pilot program at eight of our thirty elementary schools. It is under the direction of the GATE elementary curriculum specialist. The purposes of this program are to provide more enriched learning experiences to culturally and linguistically diverse students, and to increase the number of Hispanic referrals for GATE identification. However, the program does not target Hispanic students exclusively. The rationale for increasing Hispanic referrals has been discussed. The point of providing enriched learning experiences is to give students some experience with higher order thinking skills prior to formal assessment for the GATE program. These students are often taught in mastery programs for the English language and basic academic skills. Bright students may not have the opportunity to show advanced abilities in reasoning in their classroom work. When referred for GATE assessment, these students usually find themselves in the IQ testing situation where higher order thinking, hypothesizing, and awareness of the possibility of multiple answers to a question are necessary. By providing enriched learning opportunities prior to administration of an IQ test, it is thought that students will be better prepared to perform up to their maximum. Students spend up to three years in HPDP before they are referred for formal GATE assessment or dropped from the program.

Originally, we asked teachers at the target schools to assess each student in the classroom. Having the license to use the *Multi-Dimensional Screening Device (MDSD)*, we modified this instrument for our use. The *MDSD* is a rating scale requiring the teacher to assign numbers from one to ten for different behaviors thought to indicate giftedness. Over the years, students have been added to the program on a more informal basis. Teachers have continued to use the list of behaviors as a guide to placing students with observed potential.

While there have been successes and failures in implementing this program, it continues to be a viable means of transitioning bright students from the regular classroom to the GATE program. In the five years of the program's existence, over 100 HPDP students have been identified permanently. It is anyone's guess as to how many of these students would have been referred anyway, but these positive results indicate the value of continuing and expanding HPDP.

At the present time, a new program for increasing referrals of Hispanic students is being implemented. This program is under the direction of the GATE school psychologist and is so new that no acronym has been found for it. The practice of looking at every student and the use of any rating scale has been discontinued. Experience with the MDSD showed that teachers will assign

high numbers to students they think are bright, average numbers to those perceived as average, and low numbers to low ability students. As in HPDP, teachers are asked to cast a wide net in nominating the potentially gifted. Now teachers submit names and computer identification numbers of students who show academic promise. Standardized testing scores and student profile information are obtained from the district mainframe computer. Access to the computer was obtained after HPDP was implemented. There is no longer the need to pull cumulative records and emergency cards to photocopy or transcribe student information.

It is thought that the increased referral of Hispanic candidates will ultimately result in an increased number of identified Hispanic students. This practice, however, will also increase a persistent and long-standing problem in the formal assessment process. There is a large backlog of referrals for testing and a long waiting period between referral and assessment. If referrals are increased, the backlog will become greater.

Therefore, a second purpose of this program is to pilot a means of prioritizing all referrals so that students who show the greatest potential are assessed first. A preliminary review of standardized test scores will be conducted to find students who should be referred for formal GATE assessment. Students who are not age-appropriate for their grade or who show extremely low scores will be placed in a reconsideration file to be assessed at the end of the following school year. Teachers will be advised to formally refer high scoring students and they will be consulted about students placed on hold.

The largest group of referred students will be prioritized for formal GATE assessment or placement in HPDP using group tests. Cognitive ability and linguistic facility will be assessed with the *Raven's Progressive Matrices* and selected subtests of the *Brigance Comprehensive Inventory of Basic Skills*, Spanish and English versions.

Derived scores for the *Raven* and the *Brigance* subtests will be obtained by arranging the tests by grade level and then assigning the highest scoring student a "1," the next highest a "2," and so on. These rankings will be reported on a matrix for each child. Combining the separate scores into one score will be avoided if possible.

The top ten percent of these students will be formally assessed for the GATE program. Students placed in HPDP will be formally assessed or dropped from consideration after, at most, three years of participation. This decision will be based on the same criteria used for permanent placement (teacher statement, standardized test scores, and quality of work sample.)

### Some Issues to Consider

Over the years, questions have been raised about these assessment procedures. In this final section, some philosophical viewpoints are presented. Keep in mind that these procedures have evolved over time (a story in itself). They will continue to evolve until certain knowledge is gained that all students who could benefit from higher level instruction are being fully and appropriately served.

**Use of IQ Test for Placement.** There is widespread, concerned, and valid criticism of using standardized test measures for assessing student learning. There is special concern about standardized assessment of minority students.

The main criticism of standardized assessment is that it is biased against students whose culture and language are different from the population used in standardization. It is true that such bias exists. It is equally true that there is potential for bias in any assessment method.

Bias does not exist so much in a given test score as it does in those who interpret the score. It is better to recognize that this bias exists and, to the best of our ability, account for it. It has been observed that bright students who are culturally and linguistically different consistently score in the gifted range on subtests of reasoning, verbal as well as visual or quantitative.

There may be greater bias against such students where curricular mastery, compliance, and good self-conduct are valued while critical or creative thought, or the drive to produce a perfect classwork product are ignored. IQ testing, appropriately interpreted for evidence of giftedness and potential for bias, may be the only known method that gives minority students an open ceiling to measure the furthest extent of their intellectual capabilities.

Any single assessment only represents performance at one point in time. By monitoring student performance over time, we gain the most accurate measure of actual ability. Teachers who observe evidence of giftedness in a student should be encouraged to refer the student, regardless of previous denial to GATE program access. GATE program assessment procedures should be flexible enough to respond to these referrals, especially if they are referrals of students whose second language is English.

**Temporary Placement.** Potentially good effects and potentially bad effects may result from temporary placement. On the good side, students who show some gifted potential will be given access to higher level instruction even though formal measures do not unequivocally indicate high intellectual ability.

On the bad side, expectations on the part of parents and students may be raised falsely. The child who is given access and then does not measure up to the level of GATE performance may go away from the experience with a feeling of failure.

Looking at our past and present record of failing to find sufficient numbers of Hispanic students, it is our philosophic judgment that it is better to be biased in the direction of more inclusive access.

**High Rate of Identification.** Identifying larger numbers of Hispanic students may not be a good thing if we are only giving them a label. Diluting the classroom program so that it meets the level of the students placed rather than the level of gifted education results in something that cannot, in good conscience, be described as GATE. Placing

students temporarily is certainly going to raise the number of students participating. Is it going to raise the number of students benefiting? It will as long as teachers understand that temporary participation is also a means of assessing giftedness. Teachers must know what gifted standards are and they must be encouraged to maintain these standards as part of the benchmark criteria for permanent GATE placement.

We may be identifying a large number of Hispanic students because those who come to us represent only the very top students. We may not be looking at everyone we should look at. Another source of this high identification rate is that a number (we keep no records on this) of students may be referred and assessed for the second or third time, having previously been denied access.

**GATE Identification.** The fundamental question in the identification process is, "Will this student benefit from an instructional program that emphasizes accelerated, in-depth, and complex learning experiences?" The response is really a prediction about the best learning program for a given student.

This discussion has been about different methods of identifying students for GATE program participation. We should always keep in mind that identifying, educating, and guiding gifted students are parts of a total program offering services to exceptionally bright students. We need to think about what we are doing, monitor what we are doing, provide staff development, and communicate with our students and parents, so that everyone will understand how one part of the program connects with another.

**Disclaimer.** Everything said in this discussion describes what is being done in the Santa Ana Unified School District as the author sees it. The reader is guaranteed that not everyone sees our efforts in the same way. We are constantly questioned about our prejudices, practices, knowledge, and ability to think rationally, and we are always questioning ourselves. Though at times disquieting, this is all as it should be. There is no justification for complacence as long as bright children are not being served.

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**Nielson**

*Continued from page 19*

tion or referral checklists (e.g. *Scales for rating the behavioral characteristics of superior students*), filled out by teachers and/or parents, have a majority of items derived from the "typical" learning and leadership characteristics posited by Terman. In a circular process, we nominate children based on the "typical" profile of a gifted child, do research to discover characteristics of gifted children among those whose selection was based on that profile, and conclude that "our data agree with Terman." Small wonder that educational programs designed for gifted children often are criticized as elitist. Small wonder that, using procedures similar to those devised by Terman more than seventy years ago, even in states with large minority populations, the majority of students identified as gifted are still from stable Caucasian families with well-educated, professional parents (Foxworth, 1986; Gay, 1989). Gay noted Terman's assertion of an increased probability of identification of gifted children from families of higher socioeconomic status and reported the same pattern in Georgia. She reported that no children had been identified as gifted in poorer areas of the state; in a more affluent area, 8.9 percent of the children were so identified.

"What was overlooked was that the population of the state of Georgia has a large percentage of persons who may be potentially gifted but do not typically perform well on standardized tests of achievement and/or ability. These black, rural, and lower socioeconomic populations have produced adults of gifted achievement. Such circumstances suggest the need for measures of identification that are not as highly correlated to socioeconomic status" (Gay, 1989, p. 7).

When researchers use similar methods and reach similar types of conclusions, "a logical question should be raised as to whether there is inherent in the research method a previously unrecognized factor that is the cause of the conclusions" (Jacobs, 1970, p. 170). Many researchers have pointed to inappropriate tests as a factor in the underrepresentation of children from minority groups in programs for the gifted. I believe that many potentially gifted children never are nominated for possible selection because they don't exhibit the typical behaviors Terman described so many years ago. For example, Hispanic and African-American parents are less likely to request assessment for giftedness than are Caucasian parents (Scott, Perou, Urbano, Hogan, & Gold, 1992).

In their call for new research on the characteristics of gifted children, Hughes and Converse (1962) noted that several authors have criticized Terman's research because of weaknesses in selection methods, sampling techniques, nomination procedures, and group tests used for screening, "but few have questioned the validity of his portrait of the gifted" (p. 179).

Too often, people see only what they expect to find and, when they assume a stereotypical profile of a gifted child, they fail to recognize giftedness in atypical children. Educators tend to operate according to stereotypes based on minimal or flawed information until

they meet a child who makes them question unconscious assumptions (Kerr, 1991). If educators assert that gifted children can be found in nontraditional groups and diverse populations, they often find them. The problem is how to encourage educators and parents to look beyond erroneous assumptions about giftedness to see the strengths and needs of individuals. Recently, Passow (1989) stressed the need for more research on families of the gifted including the ways that families "facilitate, impede and otherwise impact on the development of talent" (p. 228).

### Comparison of Families of Gifted Students

In one large, multicultural school district in the American southwest, officials have been concerned about the low percentage of students from minority groups enrolled in programs for the gifted. In a number of schools in high minority and/or low socio-economic status neighborhoods, no children had been nominated by teachers or parents for possible placement in the district programs for gifted and talented students. Working with a team of researchers at the University of Arizona, a plan was made to target some of these schools. The DISCOVER Assessment Process (Maker, 1992; Maker, Rogers, & Nielson, 1992) was used to identify kindergarten students who demonstrated superior problem-solving abilities on a series of engaging activities designed to assess strengths in spatial, logical-mathematical, and linguistic reasoning. Approximately 600 students were assessed each year from 1990 through 1993. Of that group, about 100 students per year were referred to the office of gifted and talented education for further study. A case study portfolio, prepared for each child, could include results of individual testing, open-ended questionnaires filled out by teachers and parents, samples of student work, and reports from bilingual language evaluations. Once portfolios were assembled, a district committee consisting of teachers, parents, psychologists, staff members from the Gifted and Talented office, and University of Arizona representatives met to review the cases. Each portfolio was independently rated by five members of the committee as 1) definitely qualified, 2) may be qualified, or 3) probably not qualified. After tabulations were complete, the committee again met to discuss individual cases for whom decisions were equivocal. Those students recommended by the committee then were offered placement in self-contained classes for gifted first grade students.

At the same time, the traditional procedures of teacher and/or parent nomination and psychometric testing were used in other district schools as the basis for selection of first grade students for the self-contained program. As a result, I had an opportunity to collect data from families of children, differently identified as gifted, from targeted schools and nontargeted schools in the same community. Parents or guardians of 218 students enrolled in five self-contained first grade classes and five second-grade classes for gifted children were contacted and requested to provide certain demographic information about their families. Subjects represent one, and only one, of two groups: parents of gifted children who attended kindergarten in a targeted school with a high percentage of minority and/or low-income families and parents of children who attended kindergarten in other schools.

#### Instrument

A two-part questionnaire was designed to elicit factual data about the families of children in the ten classrooms. Several items in the questionnaire are similar to items on the Home Information Blank used by Terman (1925). While replication of Terman's research is neither feasible nor, in my opinion, desirable, questions related to marital status of parents, family size, birth order of gifted children, family income, type of home, parental education, race, and countries of national origin are similar to questions asked in that study.

Several questions are similar to those used to obtain U.S. Census data and are keyed to quartile or quintile ranges from the 1990 census. Additional questions related to divorced or single parents and blended families are included as a result of recent research by Rogers & Nielson (1993). Several items about teachers in the family, whether a parent has taken classes during the past year and/or volunteered at a school were included to assess familiarity with educational systems and practices. A theoretical basis has not been established for this group of questions but, intuitively, I believe parents who are closely associated with schools may be more aware of special programs. For example, at one elementary school, administered by the Bureau of Indian Affairs, more than 90 percent of students identified as gifted by school officials are children of staff members (C. J. Maker, personal communication July 15, 1993).

#### Procedures

Each questionnaire was coded for data analysis purposes and to ensure confidentiality. The questionnaire, accompanied by a letter of introduction to explain why the data are important, how they will be used, and how confidentiality will be assured, and a stamped self-addressed envelope was mailed to parents of all children enrolled in self-contained first- and second-grade classes for the gifted in the cooperating school district. If parents had identified Spanish as the preferred language of the home on school records, Spanish versions of both questionnaire and letter were sent.

#### Data Analysis

As gifted children constitute an extreme of the normal population distribution and much of the requested data is categorical in nature, nonparametric tests were used to examine the differences in the shape or central tendency of the populations underlying the groups (Shavelson, 1988). Data from the Targeted Group and the Nontargeted Group were arranged in contingency tables; when obtained chi square ratios had a probability level

equal to or less than .05, data were converted to percentages for purposes of comparison. Comparisons include

1. Characteristics of families of giftedchildren who attended kindergarten in a targeted school with families of children who attended kindergarten in schools not targeted;
2. Characteristics of families of gifted children in the Targeted and Nontargeted Groups in this study with the characteristics of families described by Terman (1925);
3. Characteristics of the families in the Targeted and Nontargeted Groups and families with children of similar ages in the general population of the local community.

### Results

Of 212 questionnaires mailed, 159 (75 percent) were returned in time for data analysis. Nine questionnaires lacked sufficient information to be used. Thus, data from 56 Targeted Group families and 94 Nontargeted Group families were available for analysis.

Questionnaire items were grouped into four superordinate categories: family constellation variables, ethnic and cultural variables, economic variables, and school experience variables.

#### Family Constellation Variables

Items in this category include family size, relationship of adults in the household (e.g. birth parent, step-parent, grandparent) to the gifted child, age of parents at the birth of their first child, and gender ratio. No significant differences were found between the Targeted and Nontargeted Groups in any of the family constellation variables. However, the percentage (12.9) of children living in single-parent households among the Nontargeted families significantly differs ($p < .001$) from that of their age mates in the general population (31.0) and is somewhat lower ($p = .085$) than in the Targeted Group (21.1). Neither the census figures nor the Terman studies report blended families; I can do little more than speculate that the 7.1 percent of families in the Terman Group affected by divorce or separation were headed by a single mother. In the 1926–27 study of the Terman Group (Burks, B.S., Jensen, D.W. & Terman, L.M., 1930), the authors reported that sixteen percent of the subjects lived with mothers only. The data from my survey also indicate that one in four gifted children in the two groups has experienced the divorce of parents, and one in six families includes other relatives. Several elements of the "Terman Myth" are not supported in this survey of families of gifted first and second grade students.

- The average number of children per family in the Targeted and Nontargeted Groups (2.3) is larger than that in the general population (1.85).
- At least thirty percent of the parents of gifted children have been divorced or never married; often, parents in "intact" families have children from a prior marriage.
- The average age of parents at the birth of their first child was about 24—more than five years younger than the average age of Terman Group parents.

The disparity in gender ratio (1.33 boys to 1 girl in Nontargeted Group; 1 to 1 in the Targeted Group) is not statistically significant. However, I believe the disparity is of critical importance to educators. Terman (1925) reported a ratio of male to female subjects of 1.16 to 1. With an even greater gender disparity in the Nontargeted Group, the possibility of gender bias in nomination or identification, as early as age 5, deserves further investigation.

The families in the Targeted and Nontargeted Groups are similar in almost all other family constellation variables. Three of four children live in the city where they were born, one in seven moved from another state, and one in ten immigrated from another country. About eighty percent of children in each group attended preschool, although children in the Nontargeted Group are twice as likely to take private lessons of some kind. The health of children was rated "excellent" by more than seventy-five percent of parents in both groups; three percent were identified as having a health problem (e.g. asthma, epilepsy, frequent severe headaches). Approximately ten percent of the children are left handed and about twelve percent of each group wear glasses. Less than five percent have a condition (e.g. Attention Deficit Disorder, epilepsy, learning disability, hearing loss, communicative disorder) that also affects educational needs.

#### Ethnic/Cultural, Economic, and Educational Experience Variables

Targeted and Nontargeted Group families differed on almost every question asked in these three categories. Differences between the two groups are summarized in Table 1.

Many differences were found between the two groups of families who participated in this study and the families of the Terman (1925) subjects. As expected, the greatest differences are found between the families of gifted children from the targeted high-minority and/or low-income schools and the families of the Terman subjects. Fewer differences exist between the Nontargeted Group families and the Terman families. To facilitate comparison, data in Table 2 are reported as ratios to population data from the 1990 census for Targeted and Nontargeted Groups and data from the 1920 census for the Terman Group.

### Summary

The families of gifted children in the two groups who participated in this research do, indeed, differ from the families of the "main group" of gifted children described by Terman (1925) in the first volume of *Genetic Studies of Genius*. Just as the Targeted and Nontargeted Groups reflect the context of this place and time, the families of the Terman Group reflect the population from which they were selected. The Nontargeted Group, whose children were identified as gifted through procedures similar to those used by Terman, diverges from the population of the local community in almost all variables, although most differences are not as extreme as those between

TABLE 1 Differences between Targeted and Nontargeted Groups

| Variable | Probability | Source of Difference |
|---|---|---|
| Race/Ethnicity | .0000 | 50.5% of the Targeted Group are Hispanic<br>78.3% of the Nontargeted Group are Caucasian |
| Ancestral Origin | .0000 | 17% of Targeted Group are European<br>52% of the Nontargeted Group are European |
| Preferred Language | .0000 | 21.8% of Targeted Group prefer Spanish<br>3.6% of Nontargeted Group prefer Spanish |
| Second Language(s) | .0000 | 62.0% of Targeted Group are bilingual<br>44.9% of Nontargeted Group are bilingual |
| Religious Preference | .0000 | 53% of Targeted Group prefer Catholicism<br>35.4% of Nontargeted Group prefer "none" |
| Birthplace of Parents | .0000 | 26.5% of Targeted Group were born outside U.S.<br>66.9% of Nontargeted Group were born in another state |
| Mobility | .0000 | 33.3% of Targeted Group have always lived in state<br>13.3% of Nontargeted Group have always lived in state |
| Family Income | .0012 | 31.4% of Targeted Group in top two quintiles<br>56.1% of Nontargeted Group in top two quintiles |
| Family home | .0019 | 43.6% of Targeted Group above median<br>74.6% of Nontargeted Group above median |
| Parents' Occupation | .0004 | 33.9% of Targeted Group are Professional/Executive<br>64.4% of Nontargeted Group are Professional/Executive |
| Parents' Educational Attainment | .0000 | 33.3% of Targeted Group have no college<br>9.4% of Nontargeted Group have no college |
| Degrees Earned | .0000 | 8% of Targeted Group have advanced degrees<br>58% of Nontargeted Group have advanced degrees |
| Teaching Experience | .0004 | 11.2% of Targeted Group<br>31.6% of Nontargeted Group |
| Identified as Gifted | .0098 | 36.7% of Targeted Group<br>63.3% of Nontargeted Group |
| Work at a School, or Volunteer at Child's School | .0025 | 7.4% of Targeted Group work at a school<br>16.1% of Nontargeted Group work at a school<br>29.5% of Targeted Group volunteer<br>40.6% of Nontargeted Group volunteer |

TABLE 2 Comparison of Targeted, Nontargeted, and Terman Groups[1]

| Variable | Targeted Group | Nontargeted Group | Terman Group | Analysis of Difference between Nontargeted Group and Terman Group |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Children per family | 1.3 to 1 | 1.2 to 1 | 1 to 1 | Real difference. Terman families, reportedly smaller than general population, were similarly sized. |
| Male to female ratio | 1 to 1 | 1.33 to 1 | 1.16 to 1 | No statistical difference. |
| Children living with two parents | 1.1 to 1 | 1.25 to 1 | 1.05 to 1 | No difference. Terman's use of term, "intact families" may refer to two-parent households. |
| Children of white race | 1 to 1.7 | 1.2 to 1 | 1.03 to 1 | Real. Although Terman Group purposely excluded minority races, California population in 1920 was 95.7% white. |
| Percentage of European origin | 17% | 52% | 99% | Historical and real. Majority of parents in Nontargeted Group reported US or mixed origin; 80% of Terman subjects were of British or German ancestry. |
| Parents born in another country | 2.1 to 1 | 1 to 1.7 | 1 to 1.3 | Probably historical. |
| Income in top two population quintiles | 1 to 1.3 | 1.4 to 1 | 2 to 1 | Real. Average income of Terman families was more than triple that of the general population. |
| Parents in professional occupations | 1.7 to 1 | 3.1 to 1 | 10 to 1 | Both historical and real. Fewer professional positions existed in 1920. |
| Ratio of mothers in work force to full-time homemakers | 1.4 to 1 | 4.3 to 1 | 1 to 3.7[2] | Probably historical. Few Terman Group mothers were in work force unless divorced or widowed. |
| Parents with university degrees | 1.2 to 1 | 2.8 to 1 | 6.4 to 1 | Historical and real. Percentage of university graduates in the general population in 1990 is seven times greater than in 1920. |
| Parents with advanced degrees | 1 to 1 | 4.8 to 1 | 26 to 1 | Historical and real. Terman's population may have included a high proportion of university faculty and staff. |

[1] Source: Terman (1925) Genetic Studies of Genius, Vol. 1
[2] Source: Burks et al (1930) Genetic Studies of Genius, Vol. 3

the Terman Group and the general population in 1921. As expected, the proportion of minority families in the Targeted Group is almost double that of the general population of the community. The lower occupational status and educational attainment of parents in the Targeted Group also is significant and a probable result of economic factors as well. The cost of obtaining an advanced education, in direct expense and lost earning time, is too great for many individuals from low-income groups. At the same time, occupations that might lead to higher incomes generally require advanced degrees.

The results of this study do indicate that reliance on traditional nomination and testing procedures for the selection of students to participate in programs for the gifted is elitist, racist, and sexist. Merely changing nomination forms or using different psychometric tests will not result in equitable representation of children from all racial and cultural groups in this country. The Terman myth is so embedded in our collective consciousness that we are unaware of its influence on our decisions. Results cited above provide clear evidence that the Terman (1925) description of the characteristics of the family of the "typical" gifted child must be recognized as a fiction, an artifact of biased selection procedures (Gould, 1981) and Terman's strong hereditarian bias. Based on research with a sample of gifted children drawn from "better" schools in "better" neighborhoods, Terman (1925) concluded that the parents of gifted children have higher levels of educational attainment, higher status occupations, more "comfortable" incomes, and "better" homes than families of "unselected" children. In other words, the conclusions of Terman's (1925) research provided the "scientific evidence" to support the inevitability of existing social and academic hierarchies (Mensh & Mensh, 1991). Family income, home ownership, and stable families, characteristics embedded in the "Terman Myth", still seem to be major factors in the identification of gifted children in Georgia (Gay, 1989). The differences observed between the Targeted Group and the Nontargeted Group in this research also support the charges of cultural and/or socio-economic bias in procedures used to identify children as gifted (Richert, 1987).

A reasonable conclusion is that the first breakdown occurs in the nominating process. One of the most widely used and carefully researched scales for rating superior students (Renzulli, Smith, White, Callahan, & Hartman, 1976) lists 85 characteristics of superior students for teachers to rate. Many of the items on this and other checklists are based on research conducted by Terman and his associates between 1904 and 1930. A restricted definition of giftedness and a subconscious belief in the "Terman Myth" may contribute equally to the fact that highly able children from divergent populations seldom are referred for possible placement in programs for the gifted.

### Implications

An expanded definition of intelligence, with an emphasis on superior problem-solving ability with manipulatives, contributed to the identification of a number of gifted children from targeted schools in high minority and/or low-income populations. Children, identified either by traditional procedures or the expanded process, were mixed in self-contained classrooms for the gifted. Teachers do not know how individual children were identified and have seen no achievement differences between the mixed classes and previous classes in which only traditional selection procedures were used (Barkan, 1992). The fact that kindergarten teachers in the targeted schools previously had not referred children as possibly gifted is evidence that probable bias exists in the referral stage, as well as the assessment phase, of traditional identification and selection procedures.

This finding has clear implications for policy makers. Traditional procedures used to identify children for participation in programs for the gifted are biased toward children from higher socio-economic levels and unfairly discriminate against children from divergent populations. Giftedness can no longer be defined by a score on a standardized test or by high achievement only in academic tasks. The definition must be broadened to focus on the ability to use both inner resources (cognitive, motivational, strategic) and external resources to solve a variety of problems in socio-cultural context. Greater emphasis also must be given to the ability to solve a *variety* of complex problems, such as those used in this research, for initial assessment in targeted schools. The evidence is clear that traditional procedures are not working. Educators must examine whether their own beliefs and practices contribute to persistent failure to identify highly competent children from underserved populations.

**Aleene Nielson is an Adjunct Assistant Professor, Department of Special Education and Rehabilitation, University of Arizona**

A complete list of references for this article may be obtained by contacting the *Communicator* editor.

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# COMMUNICATOR

# THE PRIMARY GIFTED CHILD

## Note-taking: The Real Secret to Research for Primary GATE Children

by ELAINE WIENER

Search your soul—your conscience—your honor—your integrity. Have you ever (be honest) copied information for a research report during your school days? Did you do this simply because you really didn't know *how* to do the research?

This happens, even in this technological age. When students are taught the traditional sequential procedure, such as this one from Compton's Encyclopedia, they can easily fall into a state of what we might call "verb deficit."

**I. Choose a topic.**
***Choose?*** **"Well, I can do that!"**

**II. Assemble facts.**
***Assemble?*** **"How do I assemble?"**

**III. Take notes.**
***Take notes?*** **"Where am I supposed to take them?"**

**IV. Organize information.**
***Organize?*** **"Huh?"**

**V. Write and document report.**
***Document?*** **"Docu-who?"**

Although humor and trite phrases such as "verb deficit" can trivialize such a serious topic, this is exactly where the research process breaks down. How *does* one *do* those verbs?

*Continued on page 20*

## Managing a Gifted Primary Classroom

by NANCY PHILLIPS

The question, "How do you manage a self-contained classroom of thirty-two gifted 1st, 2nd, and 3rd graders?" is often asked, both by other teachers and by parents of prospective students. The first answer that comes to mind is, "Very carefully!" However, after having taught such a group for twenty-one years, I have established a program that works for me.

The concept of managing three grade levels simultaneously without paid help is comparable to that of managing a large family, in which each member has individual needs as well as those needs of the group as a whole. Just as a large family develops a sense of unity, a multi-grade classroom must generate an environment of teamwork. During this process, the students are learning the traits of cooperation and responsibility. The key to the development of such a program is organization and a system of parental involvement.

The philosophy of our program is to teach the basics first, and then to branch off into a differentiated curriculum by studying in depth and expanding this basic foundation. One of the benefits inherent in this program is that of "preview" and "review" in which students often are able to clarify a concept that they have had difficulty with.

The classroom day is set up in various blocks of time, and the students quickly learn our daily schedule. We use the basic state math series plus a supplementary program. The students are given daily instruction and assignments in En-

*Continued on page 23*



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# PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

**by MARTHA FLOURNOY**

One of the advantages of being CAG president is meeting a variety of people. I would like to take this opportunity to let you get to know me in my new position.

It all began with children. My husband and I have two girls, now ages 19 and 16. Both girls progressed very rapidly and were always extremely verbal. They both learned to read at young ages. They are very different people, however, in that they approach and react to problems and situations in very different ways, have different interests as well as talents, but they appreciate each other for their differences. We enrolled the girls in a private school, thinking that was the best place for them. We began hearing very positive things about our local public school district. When they were in grades 2 and 5 we investigated the GATE program in our local school district, and we asked for them to be evaluated. Both qualified, and with the beginning of their 3rd and 6th grade years we embarked on a path that has truly influenced all of our lives. As a result of all this, I take my present position with CAG.

As concerned parents we have always been involved with our children's education. As a special education teacher, I had the advantage of "knowing the ropes" or at least being familiar with the "lingo" used in education, or, in short, having an inside track on the "Education Game." Those of us in education know that the lingo changes from time to time, so that if you take time out, you must "take a refresher course" to be fully conversant again. As the girls entered public school, I made my own return to public school as a resource teacher.

On the parental front, I soon found myself drafted as the Chairperson of the Parent Advisory Council and worked with our district GATE Coordinator. She was always very involved and aware of opportunities to contribute and gain expertise; when she heard that a position was open for the Parent Regional Representative to CAG, she suggested that I run. Being someone who is always looking for a challenge to meet, I did just that. I served four years as a regional representative and gained experience, knowledge, and a variety of perspectives.

The Education Game can be a confusing and a complicated one, if we lose sight of the intended winners— the students—our children. No matter who the players are—parents, teachers, administrators, state department personnel, local school board members, coordinators, counselors and a host of others—the winners *must* be our children. We are all different pieces on the game board with different contributions to make and different paths to take, but all with the same goal. We all have our setbacks—"go back two spaces," or "return to home," but we continue to play because reaching the goal is so worthwhile.

CAG has begun to offer structure and guidelines for the Game for teachers by conducting Teacher Institutes for Differentiating the Curriculum. It is important that parents join educators in understanding differentiation at school and at home, and enlarging the flow of information of current practices, ideas, resources and support for our children. It is one of my goals to invite, involve and increase parental and educator support. In this time of decreasing financial resources, we must make the best use of what we have; our power lies in joining together to share and build on what we have, to achieve what can be. We must never lose sight of the winners in this GAME.


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October 7–8, 1994
**Teacher Institute**, San Diego, CA
Two-day institute at Handlery Hotel & Country Club on Differentiating the Curriculum for Gifted Students. For information, contact the CAG office, 415/965-0653.

October 21–22, 1994
**Teacher Institute**, Fresno, CA
Two-day institute at Hilton Hotel on Differentiating the Curriculum for Gifted Students. For information, contact the CAG office, 415/965-0653.

October 22, 1994
**Santa Lucia Region Fall Regional Conference**, Foothill College, Los Altos Hills. For information, contact Margaret Rodrigues, 408/779-5278 or Geri Williams, 408/998-6109.

October 29–30, 1994
**Teacher Institute**, Santa Barbara, CA
Two-day institute at Radisson Hotel on Differentiating the Curriculum for Gifted Students. For information, contact the CAG office, 415/965-0653.

November 4–5, 1994
**Teacher Institute**, Moreno Valley, CA
Two-day institute at Vista Verde Middle School on Differentiating the Curriculum for Gifted Students. For information, contact the CAG office, 415/965-0653.

November 9–13, 1994
**National Association For Gifted Children (NAGC) Conference,** Salt Lake City, Utah. For registration materials, call NAGC at 202/785-4268.

March 3–5, 1995
**33rd Annual CAG Conference**, *Opening the World to Gifted Students*, Parc Oakland Hotel & Convention Center, Oakland, CA.

July 30–August 4, 1995
**11th World Conference on Gifted and Talented Children**, *Maximizing Potential: Lengthening and Strengthening Our Stride*, Hong Kong.

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# Ten-Year-Old Thinkers Trapped in Six-Year-Old Bodies!

by JEAN DRUM

No, this isn't a horror story in a grocery store tabloid. It's a description of the predicament that too many young gifted children find themselves in when, all shiny-eyed with anticipation, they start school.

Gifted kids are not in sync with themselves or with the rest of the world, and primary age gifted kids are the hardest hit. First-grader Neal can think up stunning adventure stories and keep all his siblings entranced for hours, but his six-year-old hands can't begin to write them down on paper. Sachiko can read anything, but teen-age stories about complexion problems and cool boyfriends don't grab her interest, and books about kids her age are written in "baby" style. Nhuanh can do complex math problems in her head, but she can't keep the numbers in line on a piece of paper. Jorge knows every rule in baseball and can quote statistics until his friends are glassy eyed, but his hand-eye coordination is just like any other six year old's, and he can't hit or catch anything.

So what happens when these children walk into that first-grade room, new shoes squeaking and lunch boxes filled? They are faced with an enormous amount of frustration, unless they are lucky enough to be in a GATE class with an experienced primary teacher. Many of them can already read, since they have taught themselves to read (or bullied their mothers into teaching them) before they get to school. This is very nice, of course, but what can a first-grade teacher with a class of children who are only just ready to learn the sounds and letters of the alphabet do with a kid who already knows how to read? They're out of sync with the rest of the class and that makes life hard for the teacher. Neal, who can tell those stories, probably talks all the time (and we all know what that can do to a teacher) but since he can't do any better at writing manuscript than anyone else, she ends up being annoyed with him and she certainly doesn't think he's gifted. How can a kid be gifted when he writes all his b's backwards? How can a kid be gifted when he can't learn to jump rope? How *can* a kid be gifted when she can't even share the crayons?

Of course people with unusual gifts are always somewhat out of sync with the rest of the world no matter what their age. Some learn to cope, some deny their gifts and fail to use and enjoy them, and some solve the problem by restricting their lives to those who share their gifts. Some, sadly, never are able to exist happily in a world which is so different from their inner life, and they are the ones who give rise to the perception that genius equates with the inability to manage ordinary human activities.

This leaves educators of the gifted with a rousing challenge. This little first grader who can read with the nine-year-olds, holds a pencil like a six-year-old and may still be as self-absorbed as a four-year-old needs understanding, guidance, encouragement and affirmation of what she can do.

Primary GATE children need to be provided with plenty of reading material and urged to read and read and read. Read the basic reader? Sure. It has good stories and material for discussion and the development of skills. And of course skills and comprehension need to be worked on, even with the most able young readers. But these children must always be given the additional freedom to soar. What about the child who has problems decoding but whose vocabulary and power of description suggest he has a superior intelligence? He needs to be recognized as gifted and given appropriate help early in his school experience. Woodrow Wilson was eleven before he learned to read, but no one in his family gave up or failed to recognize the ability behind the problem.

Word processors can open up the world for the primary GATE child. Little fingers which don't yet coordinate with the eyes very well can go much faster on a keyboard, which allows those gifted ideas to see the light of day. Of course we still teach them handwriting and expect the same standards of neatness that we would from any child, but their minds don't stay trapped until their muscles catch up.

Parents often seem to fear that "getting the

basics" and meeting the intellectual needs of the young gifted child are mutually exclusive. Some teachers and administrators share this concern, but this should never present a problem. Basics are just that, a base, a foundation, something that is necessary but never limiting. Sleeping Beauty's Castle and the Disneyland ticket booth both needed foundations, but that by no means limited their final forms. Just so, in a gifted primary class, basic skills are taught (usually easily and quickly) and the children are ready to expand these skills and make use of them in wonderful ways.

Social skills? It is really unnerving to watch a first grader who has just explained the process of photosynthesis kick his neighbor because she hogged all the crayons, but it happens and it doesn't make him (or her) any less gifted. It's just the out of sync business again, and this needs to be understood. When it is we can hope that we will never again hear, "If she's so smart, why can't she behave?"

Our gifted primary students need TLU (Tender Loving Understanding) to spring the trap for their minds.

## Parent Perspective

by DEBBIE MOLINA

I have been asked to share our experiences concerning our family and the pathway of education. It took a while, but I feel that I really do have something to contribute to other parents who are just starting out and trying to understand the different choices that they will be facing in the future.

It started for us when Ben, my son, was about three. He was in a local day care which had an educational program geared for different age groups. The staff was constantly telling us that our son was hyper and that he should be on medicine. He would not leave the other children alone. He wanted to help them with their work when he was through with his work (which was all the time). He always knew the answer and was getting frustrated when the teacher would not call on him. He would then become disruptive to the class. Of course, we realized it was our fault because we would always play with him using flash cards or books, and he already knew what they were covering. In talking with the staff, they moved him into kindergarten after this problem was identified. But the problem continued. Being in a private school, they promptly moved him into first grade when he was ready. They discussed this with us, and it was a difficult decision because he was already a "younger" kindergartener. We were concerned how it would affect the upper grades.

When we moved to our current home, we went to enroll him into a public school in the first grade. The first school we went to would not enroll him, even with recommendations from the previous private school he attended. They wanted to put him into kindergarten due to his age, but they did not have space available. I tried to discuss this with the principal, but it was to no avail. So I went to the other elementary school and asked for his enrollment into the kindergarten class if they had space. While I was filling out the forms, a counselor walked by and asked Ben if he understood the book he was reading. After Ben answered her, the counselor asked to talk with him for a few moments.

After their return, the counselor stated that he should be in the first grade. I appreciated her comments, but I explained what had already happened and to please just put him in the kindergarten class. She would not allow this and insisted on testing him and placing him appropriately. This was the beginning of our contact with the schools Ben attended.

Today I can reflect back to the constant in and out of the principals' offices. Ben was labeled as a "problem child" by teachers who did not understand the need for keeping him

Stephanie Topalian, Age 6
Hill School, Garden Grove Unified School District

active with extra studies. He was always in trouble for talking, walking around class, helping other students with their problems, and the worst scenario—"Asking too many questions."

Now I can also reflect back to the teachers who would come into my son's life and attempt to understand his situation. All parents can reflect back and identify a teacher or two who were the turning points in their child's life.

For us, it was a second grade teacher, fresh out of college, who took the time to get him into the school's Gifted and Talented Program. Then again in the fifth grade, after years of principal and counselor visits, a teacher who harnessed and nurtured Ben's natural ability with math and sciences. She asked our permission to enroll him into everything she could. Then started the 4-H, Water and Soil Conservation, UIL competition, science projects and school activities. We were just as busy as he was from all the involvements. The school personnel became more aware of his talents and also other students who might have been ignored if the school hadn't started to address Ben's needs. At this point we realized that we needed to work more closely with the school district when it involved any child who needed academic accommodations. We started to identify ourselves with the parents who are always having to fight for their physically handicapped or developmentally slower children.

This same teacher carried Ben through to the seventh grade. He started to excel in all areas. It has become a norm for bright children to downplay their ability so as not to be called "nerds" and kept out of the social circles. But this teacher grouped about 35-40 children who had certain abilities to excel and strengthened their camaraderie with each other. This group, even today, finds the strength they need from each other.

In the summer before seventh grade, the teacher who had been Ben's guidance teacher for the last two years came across the Duke University Talent Identification Program. She handed us the letter and knew that we would make sure that Ben and his fellow classmates who were eligible had the opportunity to take part in the program. So started participation in the TIP program at our junior high school. From that time on I have always checked with the counseling staff to see if they needed any help in identifying upcoming seventh graders who qualify for the program.

Today we have just finished filling out an application for the University of North Texas's on-campus program, TAMS-Texas Academy of Mathematics and Sciences. This program is designed so that Ben can finish his junior and senior high school years at the same time he receives college credit for his studies. We have not even considered that he could not be accepted (competition for this program is intense). After TIP encouraged Ben and recognized him at the state level for his SAT score, Ben worked and became the youngest student in the Coastal Bend area to complete calculus. Ben has attended a college program every summer since the seventh grade. We could not send him to Duke, but we made sure that he attended Texas summer programs.

To all parents who are faced with the decisions of where to go next, always involve your school system with the task of making a master plan and do not allow someone to tell you it can't be done.

**This is reprinted from TIP Network News, a publication of Duke University's Talent Identification Program.**

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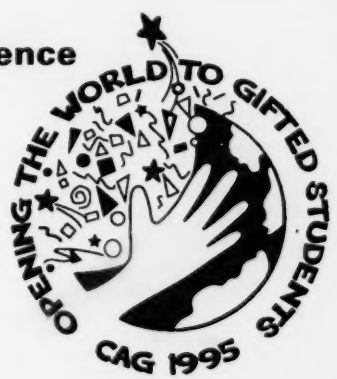

# Young Gifted Readers

by M. GAIL HICKEY

*Shane was an active, freckle-face, carrot-top with inquisitive blue eyes and a vocabulary far beyond his years. His first grade teacher, a veteran educator of 25 years, came to me at her wits' end. "I don't know what to do with him," she moaned. "He's bright, but he never finishes his seatwork. He tells wonderfully imaginative stories, but his handwriting is so bad he never gets them on paper. When I ask him why he doesn't copy the boardwork in time to go out to play, he just says he doesn't want to do it. I can't do a thing with him!"*

Shane is a member of that curious group which can be one teacher's dream and another's nightmare: the gifted child. And in Shane's case, his giftedness was complicated by yet another phenomenon—he was an "early reader."

How do you challenge a child who enters school already able to read? This article will explore that question by defining the gifted reader, highlighting the special needs of early readers, and suggesting strategies for enrichment at home and at school.

### Gifted Readers Defined

Bonds and Bonds (1980) define primary gifted readers as "...children who, upon entering first grade, are reading substantially above grade level or who possess the ability to make rapid progress in reading when given proper instruction." Interest in, persistence toward and motivation for reading should also be evident. It is important to note here that the phrase "...when given proper instruction..." is considered fundamental to the definition of gifted readers; children who come to school already reading must be neither suppressed by instruction geared toward the mean, nor neglected by being left to their own devices. Gifted readers should be identified early so that an appropriately differentiated program of instruction can be planned and implemented for their ultimate benefit.

Early identification is essential, since advanced readers who are forced to continue the phonics drill and word attack skills commonly used to teach reading become disinterested and begin to underachieve (Brown and Rogan, 1983). Identification procedures to screen for giftedness, which are already in place, may not be suitable or sufficient, however, for identifying gifted readers. Many screening programs do not reach into the primary level at all, and the absence of academic documentation (such as annual achievement test scores) makes it unlikely that a high percentage of capable students will be recognized in the early grades. Thus, young children are seldom referred for the individualized testing needed to identify them as gifted. Without such testing and subsequent intervention, the gifted reader may be ignored.

Witty (1971) outlines some characteristics of gifted preschoolers to serve as a general guideline in recognizing abilities that indicate a need for specialized instruction. In addition to early reading ability, these include:

- The early use of vocabulary, accurately employed
- Language proficiency - the use of phrases and entire sentences at a very early age and the ability to tell or reproduce a story at a very early age
- Keen observation and retention of information about things observed
- Interest in books
- Early interest in calendars and clocks
- The ability to attend or concentrate for long periods of time
- Early discovery of cause and effect relationships
- The development of a variety of interests

Informal reading inventories are also helpful for classroom teachers who wish to identify early readers. Such measures can be administered quickly to individual children by the teacher, a teacher's aid or volunteer, and yield useful information about independent, instructional and frustration levels of reading instruction. As a means for identifying gifted readers, children who read independently at or above grade level, and instructionally two or more grade levels above placement can be assumed to be gifted readers. Not only should these children be referred for further testing by the school psychologist to determine whether placement in a gifted program is warranted, but classroom teachers should immediately begin to differentiate instruction to accommodate early readers' advanced abilities.

### Needs of Gifted Readers

Obviously gifted readers need differentiated

instruction, but what are their specific needs in regard to reading instruction? A number of writers in the field have addressed this question. Brown and Rogan (1983) indicate that first and foremost, reading programs for primary- level gifted readers "...must be different from that offered to average children... Just as the differentiated program cannot be more of the same offered to average children, neither can it be an earlier presentation of the regular curriculum... An emphasis on such low-level programming as that offered by basal reader series is inappropriate..."

Secondly, gifted readers need instruction which is suited to their individual needs. Generally, these needs fall within the category of advanced comprehension. Cushenberry (1974) notes that the teacher should be aware of the difference between real and superficial comprehension, since young gifted readers may be able to decode and read orally before they are able to comprehend. Yet, through proper instruction, young gifted readers are able to develop such advanced comprehension strategies as noting cause and effect, predicting outcomes, drawing conclusions and understanding author's purpose. These reading strategies are part of the process known as critical reading. Brown and Rogan (1983) suggest that appropriately differentiated instruction for gifted readers must include instruction which directs students to read more *widely*, read *creatively* and read *critically*.

Gifted readers need to be exposed to trade books rather than basal readers as the primary source of reading content. Whole language classrooms and literature-based reading programs, both of which are quickly gaining in popularity among teachers of young children, are excellent avenues for helping gifted readers develop an enthusiasm for reading more widely. Reading about significant themes has also been used successfully with gifted children (Trezise, 1977; Witty, 1971; Wooster, 1974), since even young gifted children are often able to deal with topics normally reserved for older students.

Instruction in creative reading can enhance the gifted reader's abilities in fluency of ideas, flexibility of thought, originality, complexity of thinking, elaboration, imagination and intellectual risk taking (Gallagher, 1975; Renzulli & Callahan, 1977; Witty, 1971). Teachers' use of appropriate questioning strategies, such as those which ask for alternative uses of items, adaptations to story line or plot, modifications in setting or character development, and unique combinations of character, plot and theme, can significantly stretch the young reader's creativity. Torrance (1965) indicates that creative reading abilities are best developed when books are used as a source of ideas to be communicated to readers. In this way, the reading act becomes a source of additional ideas which may then facilitate creative problem solving in real life.

Critical reading, as defined by Turner (1988), is "analytic thinking for the purpose of evaluating what is read." Burns, Roe and Ross (1984) emphasize that critical reading skills enable children to make intelligent decisions about products, entertainment and politics; since children are exposed to the need for such decisions through television and advertising from a very young age, instruction in critical reading should begin in the primary grades. Hickey (1988) recommends specific strategies for developing critical reading abilities in the early years, and such publications as *Highlights for Children* contain ideas and activities for helping young children think critically about what they read.

**Challenging Early Readers**

The research on children who learn to read prior to entering first grade reveals that the children studied were reared in supportive home environments where parents encouraged intellectual freedom and exploration, provided extended opportunities for learning and exposed their children to a variety of experiences outside the home (Cox, 1926; Goertzel & Goertzel, 1972; Terman & Oden, 1947; Strang, 1954; Price, 1976; Brown & Rogan, 1983). Burns and Collins (1987) reveal that the parents of gifted preschool readers often have provided more direct instruction in letter/sound/word concepts than have parents of gifted non-readers. Mangieri and Madigan (1984), in a study of school practices related to the teaching of reading to the gifted, report that regular classroom teachers provide the majority of instruction for these children. This review of relevant research suggests that early readers engage in significant interaction with parents and primary grades teachers which will shape their attitudes toward reading and reading instruction for life. The importance of these early interactions cannot be overemphasized.

What kinds of activities and experiences, then, are most conducive to enhancing the abilities and interests of early readers? Siegelbaum and Rotner (1983) recommend the use of key questioning strategies to guide young readers in the understanding of read-to or read-by stories. (See inset, Key Questioning Strategies, on following page.)

Siegelbaum and Rotner (1983) also recommend the use of several familiar strategies with gifted readers, such as labeling objects, making word cards and creating language experience stories. Since children learn to read when they recognize a purpose for reading and a connection between the reading act and the symbols of language (Heath & Thomas, 1984; Leichter, 1984; Smith, 1984), labeling is an excellent way for early readers to build reading vocabulary. Use small index cards and broad-tipped markers to label common objects around the house or classroom, such as "table" or "door." Children will begin to ask that additional objects be labeled so they can learn the word for that object.

Duplicates of these labels can be made to begin a child's "word card file," which is a recipe box filled with blank index cards that can be labeled with each new word the child learns. As children begin to acquire new words through books and stories, these words are added to the file. Have children practice their word cards regularly and use them in sentences or stories.

When children begin to use these

**KEY QUESTIONING STRATEGIES**

**Compare and contrast** - help children see what is the same or different about characters in a story, seasons of the year, people you know.

**Classify** - help children find a way to group: toys, clothes, food, books, your friends

**Summarize** - help children separate the relevant from the irrelevant by asking after reading a story or watching a TV show, "What happened first?" "What happened in the middle?" "What happened in the end?"

- asking for a title to a story they have written, or to a picture in a magazine.
- having them tell the most significant events from a family trip or a party they attended.

**Hypothesize** - ask children to predict what would happen if:

- We put this toy block in a full glass of water?
- We put a jar over this candle?
- We put this spoonful of sugar into warm water?
- We press this button on the television?

**Make assumptions** - help children decide, based on existing information, what else they can tell you about situations such as the following:

- Look at this small and large box. Which is heavier?
- Look at these faces. What are these people feeling?
- What will happen next in this picture? What happened before?

words in stories of their own creation, they are ready to create language experience stories. These stories are written on large chart paper by an adult or older child as the young child dictates the story. Afterward, read the story together from the chart. Eventually, children will want to read their stories by themselves, which may lead to the creation of new word cards and/or additions or elaborations to the original story.

Russell and others (1985) provide helpful tips to parents for working with gifted readers. Some of these include:

- Read a familiar story to your child, e.g. *Cinderella.* Ask your child to make up a similar story as if it were occurring today.
- Help your child maintain a scrapbook of "People I See and Places I Go." Illustrate the people and places and write descriptive captions.
- Separate the sections of a comic strip. Ask your child to arrange them in order and write a dialogue.
- While reading a story to your child, stop periodically and ask him what comes next.
- Introduce your child to all sections of the newspaper.

Finally, Halsted (1989) gives advice for reading aloud to gifted children in *Guiding the Gifted Reader.* Halsted's advice can be summarized as follows:

- Gifted children should be read aloud to regularly by a warm, loving person who can provide the stimulation and exposure to new ideas which reading aloud brings.
- Provide several brief story times a day for preschoolers, since their attention spans are very short.
- Read aloud in ways that will build language and pre-reading skills.
- Sometimes read aloud to children simply to enrich their store of knowledge.
- Provide opportunities for young children to experience being read aloud to with other children occasionally, especially if the local library offers a story hour.
- No matter when children learn to read on their own, continue to read aloud to them. This experience is so valuable that it should be stopped only when it is no longer enjoyable to both parties involved.

Challenging the early reader is a unique and ongoing task. The responsibility for challenging gifted readers begins at home, becomes formalized at school and involves concerted, collaborative effort on the part of both teachers and parents. If early readers are to realize their potential, early identification and intervention are essential.

**M. Gail Hickey is at Indiana-Purdue University at Fort Wayne, IN. This article first appeared in *Images*, Indiana Association for the Gifted, Spring 1992.**

*A complete list of the references for this article may be obtained by contacting the* Communicator *editor.*



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# Comments from James Gallagher

One of the unhappy byproducts of the educational reform movement is a series of mind-numbing slogans. In many cases, these slogans seem to have taken the place of intelligent discourse or debate that should be occurring about some of the aspects of the reform movement. Take for example the slogan, "All children can learn." One sees that slogan in print these days quite a lot, and if one is especially unlucky, one can hear it at various conferences and conventions. It is often stated with a kind of ponderous importance reserved for silly statements that people try to inflate into wisdom.

As an educator, I have worked with children with mental retardation as well as children with special gifts, and I am willing to certify to the banal truth of the slogan. Of course "all children can learn," but not at the same pace, and not at the same level of conceptualization, and not with the same knowledge structures. And that, of course, is the point. That is why it is difficult, if not impossible, to educate students who perform at the second-grade level and students who perform at the ninth-grade level at the same time in the same classroom, and it is also the reason why our curriculum is being "dumbed down" in many schools around the country. The doctrine of heterogeneous grouping actually turns out to be anti-excellence.

One of the problems of the reform movement is that some of the reforms are being presented as a moral imperative. Not only is it the "correct" educational thing to do, it is the right and virtuous thing to do. Therefore, all those who might oppose it are, at the very least, undemocratic and certainly not possessed of the moral superiority of the true believer. If the goal is to intimidate others into following instead of impressing them with results, then such bogus claims of virtue and social justice might work for a short time, until teachers and parents have direct experience with the consequences of the policy.

However, if one is determined to have a slogan, I propose one for those of us interested in gifted students. It is "Excellence for all." Let me hasten to say that this does not mean, "The same lessons, in the same place, for every student." It means instead that every student is expected to perform well at his or her own level of development, that expectations are high for everyone, and that the curriculum is differentiated.

We in gifted education have a major stake in improving the entire educational system. We cannot turn our backs on the rest of education and its problems and merely seek excellence for a tiny sliver of the school population. I recently proposed to groups of parents that some people support gifted programs in the hope that, if the whole educational system is going down the drain, they might at least salvage their own children by putting them in special programs for gifted students. But that won't work. There cannot be an island of educational excellence floating in a sea of mediocrity. Such a philosophy reminds me of the incredibly wealthy South Americans who live on lush estates surrounded by electric fences, bodyguards and attack dogs. Even if you could make 10% of the school program one of surpassing excellence while the other 90% was a morass of incompetence, would you wish to live in a society where such an educational system prevailed?

We need to applaud every effective program that seems to possess potential for all students. Henry Levin's accelerated learning, James Comer's school development program, and many other innovative efforts around the country need to be applauded by us, not only because they are using many strategies borrowed from the education of gifted students, but because every time learning is valued and upgraded for any student, it creates a more favorable atmosphere for strong programs for gifted students. The need for programs for gifted students is not reduced by these other programs for excellence, since the final result of successful programs is to increase, not decrease, student diversity. Therefore, never send to know for whom the school bell tolls for excellence; remember, it tolls for thee.

**James Gallagher is the president of the National Association for Gifted Children. This appeared in the July 1994 issue of NAGC's *Communique*.**

# The Sparkler Program: GATE in Gateway Unified School District

by LYRA JOSEFSSON

One of the state's newest unified school districts is Gateway in Redding, California. Before becoming unified, elementary sites had pull-out programs, Odyssey of the Mind groups, research groups and other occasional activities for gifted students. With unification came a unifying idea called the Sparkler Program which covers grades K-5 and accomplishes many facets of the Gateway USD's overall goals for gifted education.

Since money is one of the limiting factors, a core of site level coordinators who are regular classroom teachers attended conferences, read current literature and met regularly to plan "model lessons." The site level coordinator obtained a release day and presented an hour's lesson which drew upon two or three of the seven intelligences. As the classroom teachers observed these lessons, they made such comments as, (especially in spatial, bodily-kinesthetic or interpersonal lessons) "Wow, I've never seen that student so attentive and responsive. She really sparkled!" Or, "He usually has his head in his desk during the math lessons." This procedure had the dual advantage of educating the classroom teachers in the seven intelligences and allowing the children to be identified in the relaxed setting of their own classroom on a non-standardized test of linguistic or mathematical intelligence only. A follow-up lesson was left by the site level coordinator to give the classroom teacher more familiarity in working with gifted students and allow them to respond creatively to their gifts. As Dr. Barry Ziff said to the site level coordinators at a February workshop, "What makes a good GATE program is how we allow students to *respond* to any lesson."

One example of a Sparkler lesson was a paper problem from Odyssey of the Mind called "The Longest Paper Race." Students could work alone or in twos. Materials needed are one pair of scissors and a uniform sized piece of paper for each student or pair. No glue or tape was allowed. The lesson was introduced by asking five students at a time to come to the front of the room and stand in an unbroken line with no space between children. Some groups stood stomach to back, some stood shoulder to shoulder. The class was asked to choose which continuous line was the longest. The groups then had a chance to amend their solution. Some groups spread their arms, others lay down head to foot. The students saw that there are many different ways to meet this challenge.

Then the paper part was introduced. Each pair or participant had to cut the piece of paper into one continuous strip so that it has no beginning and no end and is large enough for two students to stand inside of it without touching it. The students had one minute to think of their solution and two minutes to cut the paper. Discussion is encouraged and observation of results is critical.

In this particular lesson spatial, bodily-kinesthetic intelligences are tapped. Those students possessing above average ability in these areas are given a chance to showcase their abilities. Then other intelligences can be added to the lesson. Poetry can be written about the "endless strips." They can be measured, added together, divided into parts. Vocabulary can be developed in exploring the concept of "endless." A suspense story might feature two children trapped forever in the endless strip. It could be taken home as a homework problem for parents and siblings to share. Students could be asked to figure out how this knowledge could be applied in other real life situations. Move over, McGyver!

The Sparkler Program sets the stage for differentiated lessons to be modelled and implemented. The classroom teacher sees and values the unique and varied responses that can occur when all seven intelligences are valued. There is buy-in by the staff, the students are not missing core curriculum, and all children benefit.

**If you have any questions, you may write to Lyra Josefsson, 22076 Cholet, Palo Cedro, CA 96073.**

**Lyra Josefsson is the parent representative from the Mt. Shasta Region.**

# "A Grand Adventure"

## A Conversation with Margaret Gosfield, Vice-President of CAG

*"A gand adventure" is what Margaret Gosfield calls her life, which began on a farm in northern Minnesota. Her primary grades were spent in a one-room schoolhouse, and after that she went to the village school nine miles from her home. She loved school, particularly reading, which allowed her to travel in her mind far from that farm in the north woods. She graduated at the top of her high school class (34 seniors), but she says she still found herself unprepared for the challenge of the University of Minnesota. "I, who loved to read, listened to fellow classmates discussing works which I had not even heard of, much less read!" She completed her BA at UC Santa Barbara after moving to California and also earned a teaching credential and MA there. She has worked for the past 25 years for the Ventura Unified School District teaching history and geography and coordinating the district program for gifted students.*

*Margaret says she does not regret her upbringing in northern Minnesota. "Academically I was not prepared, but I learned well the lessons of responsibility, industry and perseverance, in addition to the importance of seeking truth and caring for the community as a whole. These have been invaluable in my quest to 'catch up' academically and to make a difference in the education of my students and the training of the teachers I work with."*

**Q: How did you get into gifted education?**

**A:** I was still a probationary teacher when my principal called me into his office one day after school. He told me about a new program the district wished to establish at the junior high level. There had been an elementary program for gifted for a number of years, but none existed beyond 6th grade. After he described the district plans, I asked him how one could get involved. "Show an interest," he replied. And I answered, "I'm interested!" That was more than twenty years ago, and little did I know that it marked the beginning of the special focus of my life's work.

**Q: What background did you bring to it?**

**A:** Like most teachers of my generation, I received little or no teacher training regarding gifted education while attending the university. And though the part-time elementary teachers of gifted in our district worked together in planning their pull-out program instruction, I was on my own in developing the program at my school. This was both a blessing and a curse. It allowed me to work out my own plan focusing on my areas of training—history and geography. But I also had to invent a lot of wheels without the assistance of professional training in the field.

**Q: How did CAG enter into your work in those early years?**

**A:** I can still remember my first CAG conference. I don't remember the year, but it was held in San Francisco; I was there by myself since there were no other junior high teachers of gifted in our district at the time. From the moment I arrived and began looking through the program, I knew that I was in for the experience of a lifetime. There were so many presentations of interest that the difficult part was making choices. I remember dashing from one location to another to ensure that I would get into those I had selected. I was so excited and so motivated by what I heard, my skin fairly tingled the whole time I was there. And I couldn't wait to get back to my school to try some of the things I had learned and to acquire some of the resources recommended at the conference.

**Q: What do you see as your most important contribution to the development of the program for gifted in your district?**

**A:** I am very proud of our district-wide focus on student leadership training. We made a decision at the beginning to combine the 7th and 8th grade gifted students as mixed grade classes with each student staying with me for two years. That was mainly a pragmatic decision in the beginning as it allowed me to have only one preparation for the two gifted classes each. But it quickly became apparent to me that it also provided an opportunity for student leadership training. Each year half the class went on to the high school while the other half stayed on and became mentors to the incoming class members.

*Continued on page 13*

# Call for Presenters

*33rd Annual CAG Conference*

***Opening the World to Gifted Students***

*March 3–5, 1995*

**Application deadline: October 15, 1994**

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**California Association for the Gifted**
426 Escuela Avenue, Suite 19
Mountain View, CA 94040

# Call for Presenters - 33rd Annual CAG Conference

## *Opening the World to Gifted Students*

### Parc Oakland Hotel & Convention Center, March 3–5, 1995

The Board of Directors invites you to submit a proposal for a presentation in Oakland in March. The overall theme is *Opening the World to Gifted Students*. Presentations that relate to global ideas and issues, leadership, social action, foreign language and differentiating the core curriculum in depth, complexity, novelty and acceleration will be highlighted.

- Sessions will be 75 minutes in length, including question and answer time.
- Expenses for travel, lodging, and conference registration are the responsibility of each presenter.
- Presenters receive a year's complimentary membership in CAG, one membership per session.
- CAG will reimburse presenters up to $35 per session for copying of handouts and/or supplies.

Please consider carefully the room set-up and audio-visual equipment which you request. Rooms and AV are assigned based on what is requested **on this form**. Later changes are not possible to make. You may request one item in each of these three groups if it would enhance your presentation. Circle items needed.

1. overhead projector or chalk/white board
2. slide projector or VCR/monitor (VCRs are only appropriate for small presentation rooms)
3. screen

All room set-ups will be theater style unless you request otherwise. If you need tables for manipulatives or audience participation, check this box: ☐

Complete this form and mail it by **October 15, 1994** to:
CAG Office, 426 Escuela Ave., Suite 19, Mountain View, CA 94040.
All applications must be accompanied by the handouts to be distributed during the presentation. The handouts should not exceed 5 pages of information.

Name: _____ Work Phone: (  ) _____

Address: _____ Home Phone: (  ) _____

City/State: _____ Zip Code: _____

School District: _____ Position: _____

Will you have a copresenter?_____ If so, please attach a page with the above information for each copresenter.

Title of session (limit, 60 characters, including spaces)

_____

Presentation description for the conference book (limit, 75 words). Please use complete sentences, describing content as accurately and completely as possible. Include implications for G/T students.

Reference: Please give the name and contact information for a person who could recommend you as a presenter.

Name: _____ Work Phone: (  ) _____

Position: _____ Home Phone: (  ) _____

**Level (choose one)**

- ☐ Preschool/Kindergarten
- ☐ Primary (1–3)
- ☐ Intermediate (4–6)
- ☐ Middle School (6-9)
- ☐ High School (9–12)
- ☐ K/12

**Major Target Audience (choose one)**

- ☐ Teachers
- ☐ Parents
- ☐ Administrators
- ☐ Counselors
- ☐ General

# Student Art Contest and Exhibition

**Entry Deadline: January 31, 1995**
**Exhibit: March 3–5 in Oakland, CA**

The California Association for the Gifted (CAG) announces a juried art contest for students in grades 3 to 12. Fifty works will be selected for exhibit during the 33rd Annual CAG Conference in Oakland, March 3–5, 1995. Ribbons will be awarded to first, second and third place winners in each of three categories based on age.

**Rules:**

- Work must be completely original
- Any medium and subject matter is acceptable, except three-dimensional works or collages more than 1/4" thick
- Work must be matted or framed and ready to hang
- Work must be no larger than 30" by 30", including frame or matting
- Each submitted work must have a completed copy of the contest label (below) permanently affixed to the back.
- No more than six works may be submitted per school site

**Judging:**

Works will be judged in three grade-level categories:

- Category I: grades 3–6
- Category II: grades 7–9
- Category III: grades 10–12

All submitted works, whether accepted for display or not, must be picked up by the student, teacher, or parent/guardian on Sunday, March 5, 1995, between noon and 2 p.m., at the Parc Oakland Hotel. Any works not claimed by 2 p.m. become the property of CAG. Mail entries to Geri Williams at 4630 Corrida Circle, San Jose, CA 95129. Questions? Call 408-998-6109 or 408-296-1939.

## CAG Art Contest Label and Entry Form

Student name:_____

Grade:_____Age:_____Home phone: (  )_____

Full name of school:_____

School address: _____Zip_____

Teacher's name:_____

Full name of school district:_____

Person who will pick up work at conference:_____

# Student Art Contest and Exhibition

*33rd Annual CAG Conference*

***Opening the World to Gifted Students***

*March 3–5, 1995*

**Submission deadline: January 31, 1995**
**(complete form on reverse side)**

In the beginning the leadership training consisted primarily of assisting students in class projects and productions for parents. But since then, all four of our middle schools have joined in a student leadership training program that is multifaceted. With the help of a CAG minigrant (part of the CAG Demonstration Site program) our teachers recently prepared a teacher handbook with rationale and guidelines for classroom activities and several district-wide events designed specifically to develop leadership skills. If we expect our gifted students to become our future leaders, it is important that we train them for that role just as we train them to pursue academic excellence.

**Q: What do you see as CAG's role in gifted education in California?**

**A:** As I mentioned earlier, CAG gave me my introduction to improving my skills as a teacher of gifted students through its annual conference. I believe that teacher education continues to be one of the foremost contributions which CAG can make. And I have been so pleased to see the training expand from the annual conference to teacher training institutes held all over the state, the Certificate of Completion recently inaugurated and the teacher guidebook which we are currently preparing to assist teachers in their daily work.

Equally important is CAG's expanded role in providing parent education. We hope to include a parent strand in at least one of our institutes this year, as we know that we must have a partnership between home and school in order to give gifted students the best possible opportunities to develop their potential.

In recent years CAG has been working more closely with the State Department of Education, and I believe that is going to make teacher and parent training even more effective. We are excited to be working with the State Department currently on a project called, "In Search of Six." The goal is to develop guidelines and resources for teachers to prepare their students to achieve at a level commensurate with the criteria of a "six" on California assessment instruments. However, I do not want to leave out the important role CAG plays in advocacy and legislation in Sacramento. Indeed, the multitude of CAG activities sometimes leaves me a little breathless, especially considering that it is a truly a volunteer organization. I am very proud to be one of the volunteers!

**Q: What role will you play in your new position as Vice-President of CAG?**

**A:** One of my major responsibilities as Vice-President is to chair the committee preparing for the annual conference, and I'm happy to report that planning for the 1995 conference in Oakland is well under way. This year's theme is GATEways: *Opening the World to Gifted Students.*

We expect some outstanding speakers. Marion Diamond, Director of the Lawrence Hall of Science at Berkeley will be featured at a pre-conference session and will bring us the latest in brain research and development.

Joe Renzulli has been selected to make this year's Jeanne Delp lecture, and in addition he will present a special seminar. And Sally Reiss, probably the nation's foremost authority on curriculum compacting, will present a double-session on Saturday. This is to name just a few of the featured presenters.

And of course, we are still soliciting and receiving proposals from teachers and others to present workshops of the kind that kept my skin tingling throughout that first conference I attended years ago.

The conference will be held in Oakland, March 3-5. Please mark your calendars now!

**Margaret Gosfield, the newly elected vice-president of CAG, is Gifted Coordinator for the Ventura School District, Ventura, CA.**

**Poems from Ramona Otto's Class of 9 and 10 year olds at the Mirman School**

### Night

When the moon creeps high in the sky
As slow as a snail and bright as a firefly,
I stare down at the Earth curiously.
The wind whispers a soft lullaby
As the rain hits the ground in rhythm.
Coyote cubs gobble down the leftovers from dinner.
In the stillness of the desert sands,
Snakes slither cunningly by cacti.
In the darkness of the nearby town
A dog sleeps, cuddled up in a soft, cozy blanket,
While upstairs, dreams crawl into the children's heads.
I am a star in space, floating, floating,
And I must leave, for it is morning.

—Julia Silbergeld

### The Ball Field

The sun has set,
My eyes flash on,
Illuminating the rest of the field.
I can hear the hot dogs sizzle
As the wind carries
A program through the air.
Sprinklers cry on me,
As workers prepare me for the game.
I try to be brave,
As janitors peg bases into my dirt.
Fans start arriving,
Their voices hurt my ears.
I feel machines groom my hair.
Players come out onto my face
And grind their cleats into me.
I can hear the National Anthem being sung.
"Play ball!" yells the ump.

—Matt Kopald

### Night Sounds

As I lay in bed
The last streak of light
Is stolen away
By night.
A gentle breeze blows through
The open window,
Causing the curtains to dance
As gracefully as harem girls.
With the breeze,
I can hear the comforting hum
Of my parents' voices
In the other room.
A chair draped with clothes
Appears as a gruesome monster
In the darkened room.
A coyote howls.
His lonesome wail
Sends shivers down my spine.
I can now hear the ghostly moaning
Of the wind,
Crying like a lost, frightened child.
The wise old owl in the tree
Tells tales of a past, long ago forgotten.
The full moon shimmers in the distance
As if nervous and expectant.
These are the sounds I hear at night
As I drift away
Into the mystic land
Of dreams

—Tiffany Betts

### The Sea at Nighttime

At night,
When the seas are galaxies of fish,
The humpback whale sings loudly,
But the shark swims restlessly
Through the pitch black sea.
Many lantern fish,
Their lights aglow,
Swim quickly by,
And the boats are tied,
Securely in the harbor
Until dawn.

—Alvin Chin

### The Desert in Darkness

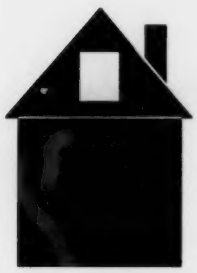
Late night in the desert,
Lizards scurry along
The rough sand,
Leaving a zig-zag trail.
Late night in the desert,
A snake slithers underground,
Sending gravel
Here and there.
Late night in the desert,
A prickly pear sits,
Watching its surroundings,
Showing off its green thorns.
Late night in the desert,
The crickets sing
From dusk to dawn,
Adding to the ambiance.
Late night in the desert,
A coyote howls
In the darkness,
Stalking its prey.
And the desert lies in darkness.

—Matthew Levitt

**The Attic**

Beams of moonlight gleam through an open window.
Outside dust devils form into people like shapes.
Leaves scratch at the window.
The whistling wind sings the Music of the Night.
Old clothes lie in the corner,
While a dusty piano sits alone in the attic.
A[illegible]aces across the floor,
P[illegible]er-patter, pitter-patter.
A mountain of boxes are stacked up,
Dangerously close to falling.
An old baby carriage, sitting alone,
Wishes for a little visitor.
And that is the attic,
The scary, scary attic.

—Rachel White



**The Washington Monument**

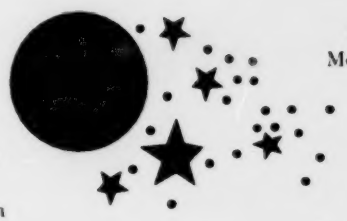
I wake up in the fresh crisp air.
I see my thin face's reflection
Shining in the mirror-like pool.
I hear birds above,
Greeting me with their morning song.
People wait in the long line
That curves around me like a snake.
A group of friends plays a game
Of soccer on The Mall.
My fellow monuments keep me company.
As the day passes by,
The sun's shadow hovers over the Capitol dome.
The crowds abandon me
Until only a few remain.
My peak reaches up to grasp the stars
As they just come out
And puncture the dark night sky.
As night passes by, I guard the city
Until daybreak comes.
Then I become just one of the many monuments
Of Washington, D.C.

—Nicole Garen

**The Desert**

When the sun goes down in the desert,
Everything changes.
The snakes come out.
The coyotes prowl
As the moon rises
In an unearthly manner.
The shadows disappear,
But can be faintly seen.
As the coyote chases a rabbit,
The night grows darker.
The coyote howls
From a cliff.
The sound slices through the desert.
For one second,
All animals feel a slight bit of insecurity.
Then the coyote goes home,
And paces back and forth,
Protecting his family like a soldier.
Out of the corner of his eye,
He sees a sliver of sunlight,
And dawn comes to the desert.

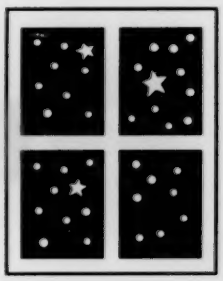
—Max Orgel



**Seashore Sunset**

Soft colorful sunsets
Give the calm announcement,
Night is coming.
The moon arrives
Floating.
Shimmering stars suspend it as the night sets in.
Bed covers tucked tight around me,
I peer out
As my window reveals the night.
Smooth dark waves,
Like massive black pearls,
Run across the sand.
Bold lighthouse beams
Glare down.
Seashells shimmer
In the moonlight.
Slowly...
I fall...
Asleep.

—C.W. Rosenthal



**The Black Alley at Night**

As night falls on the black alley,
The alley cat choir assembles
And takes its place.
On the window sills of the apartments,
Boots and old shoes are scattered
From the performance the night before.
Mountains of trash wait for the garbage truck
To drive up the next morning.
Tired drivers hurry home.
The wind howls
And the moon gives off an eerie glow.
Sirens echo off the buildings,
As the town hall clock strikes midnight.

—Daniel Barcay



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# Perfectionism and Your Child

by CHERI STRANGE

There are certain characteristics that separate some gifted children from others. One such characteristic is a perfectionist way of thinking. Gifted children are especially susceptible to perfectionist tendencies, according to Miriam Adderholt-Elliott in *What's Bad About Being Too Good*. One reason for this is that gifted children are capable of excelling way beyond the average.

Possessing perfectionist tendencies is not necessarily bad; however, not understanding these tendencies or how to deal with them can be harmful to one's relationships, successes and physical well-being.

A parent of a gifted child can help by knowing how to recognize if the child possesses these tendencies and how to help him or her to develop balance. Following are three perfectionist tendencies and suggestions that encourage balance.

**Characteristic 1 - Extremely High Standards for Self**

These children set overambitious goals. Their standards are beyond reason. This drive may be compulsive, and they may demand a higher level of performance than is possible for them to obtain.

**Suggestion 1**

You can help your children recognize they do not have to be the best at everything and that their work does not need to be spectacular every time. This can be difficult for some children to accept. Many perfectionists believe they will not be able to experience satisfaction from anything unless they perform in an outstanding manner.

Patricia Hollingsworth, writing in an issue of *Gifted Child Today*, suggests that the adult and child discuss together levels of expectations that may be helpful and cooperatively decide what tasks deserve excellent work, good work, or just plain competent work.

**Characteristic 2 - Relentless Self-Criticism**

The child pains himself with criticism by saying things such as, "I should have done that better," "I could have thought of ...," "Why did I say that?" Statements such as these create feelings of frustration and guilt.

**Suggestion 2**

You can help by listening to your child and accepting those very real feelings, offering encouragement and focusing on the positive. Teaching your child to learn from mistakes and to move on can be a tremendous help.

**Characteristic 3 - Telescopic Thinking**

This characteristic, coined by Adderholt-Elliott, refers to the child who uses both ends of the telescope to view achievement. When the child looks at goals not accomplished, the magnifying end is used. This causes the shortcomings to look larger than they actually are. When the child looks at the goals that have been accomplished, the minifying end is used, thus they appear small.

**Suggestion 3**

A parent can, first of all, accent the accomplishments. Provide opportunities for your child to slow down and enjoy having done well at something before moving on to the next task. In addition, you can encourage your child to grant himself permission to savor his own successes. Your child may need help recognizing that it is okay to say, "I did a good job on that."

**Why Should I Be Concerned?**

The ability to recognize perfectionist tendencies in a child and knowing how to help one develop the balance that is needed is important because of the harmful effects that have been associated with perfectionism. Researchers have found that some children with these tendencies experienced long periods of depression and decreased self-esteem, particularly in females. Adderholt-Elliott noted that several problems may develop, such as underachievement, drug use and eating disorders.

It is urgent that parents stress to their child that possessing these tendencies is not bad. However, a balance is needed. Strive to help your child find that balance.

**Cheri Strange is a graduate assistant at Hardin-Simmons University, Abilene, TX. She is a reformed perfectionist.**

**This article is reprinted from *Con-nec-tions!* Spring, 1994.**

# Choosing Your Own Adventure Works

by TERRIE GRAY

**Activity:** Choose Your Own Adventure/ Independent Study/ HyperCard Project

**Previous Skill Attainment:** Students had learned how to create simple HyperCard stacks consisting of a Title Card linked to several Information Cards. They had also learned to create simple flipbook-style animations.

**Length of Unit:** 6 weeks

**Procedure:** Students were instructed to select a text that interested them from the various titles available. They were to choose a partner to work with, and then select *one chapter* from the text to focus on. Together, the students were to become "experts" in their subject by reading the chapter and then sharing the information with the rest of the class by creating a HyperCard stack that:

- summarized the important principles contained in the chapter in scrolling fields
- illustrated the big ideas through animation
- contained at least one sound clip
- used appropriate clip art or original graphics
- contained a Quiz section with "right" and "wrong" responses
- (optional) contained scanned images
- (optional) contained a button linked to a video disk movie segment

Because our science department had recently purchased a wide variety of Prentice Hall texts, students could choose from all the major sciences for their study. Students who participated in the overview survey selected the following 23 topics:

| Topic Studied | Number of Students |
|---|---|
| Fish | 6 |
| Electromagnetism | 2 |
| Chemical Compounds | 6 |
| Reptiles and Birds | 2 |
| Frogs | 2 |
| Radio Waves | 3 |
| Earthquakes and Volcanoes | 12 |
| Physical and Chemical Changes | 4 |
| Matter | 2 |
| Motion | 7 |
| Human Biology | 4 |
| Drugs, Alcohol and Tobacco | 3 |
| Sound | 3 |
| Cells | 1 |
| Petrochemical Technology | 2 |
| Evolution | 6 |
| Mammals | 4 |
| Radioactivity | 4 |
| Water on the Earth's Surface | 2 |
| Deserts | 5 |
| Climate | 1 |
| Ecological Barriers | 1 |
| Kinetic and Potential Energy | 2 |

While student groups worked at the computer, the instructor circulated among them to clarify ideas from the text or to reinforce HyperCard skills. Some days started with whole-group instruction in HyperCard technique. All students were able to utilize the basic stack design, animation and sound. Many students had time to use the scanner and the laser disk player. Because so much was going on at once, each class period developed a few student "specialists" who helped others master techniques using the peripherals. Students who didn't actually incorporate scanned images or video clips into their stacks interacted with those who were using them.

At the conclusion of the project (determined by the calendar; we could have continued indefinitely) students participated in four assessment procedures:

1. Self Assessment
2. Peer Assessment
3. Teacher Assessment/Conference
4. Reflective Survey of Participation.

We assessed the projects according to the following criteria:

1. Name of students/subject studied

2. Is the HyperCard stack easy to use?
3. Does the information seem complete? Can you understand it?
4. Can you answer the questions at the end of the chapter text after using this stack?
5. Does the stack use graphics, sound, and animation appropriately? (Students were told that these features needed to correlate with the subject: car crashes in a stack on salamanders was unacceptable.)
6. (for self and teacher) Did the group work together well?
7. What grade would you give the stack?

I gave the Reflective Survey to the students to get their input on whether this approach was an enjoyable, effective way to learn. I told the students that they weren't being graded on their answers, but that the project was being evaluated. Although only one student from all three classes wrote that the project was "boring and too hard," many students (especially those in the "Low" group) did not give specific reasons for liking the project. More verbal students listed many aspects of the project they enjoyed. It should also be noted that the higher-ability students were those most likely to have time to explore the "extras," and thus commented on them. (Please note: the ability levels of students is a "soft" observation of their achievement/motivation on traditional tasks.)

Students were asked to respond to these questions:

1. What topic did you study?
2. Describe the most interesting thing you learned.
3. What kind of related lab activity would you like to do?
4. Did you like working on this computer project? Why or why not?

(See inset, What Students Liked About the Project for a summary of student responses.)

I was very pleased to see these results which indicate that students from diverse backgrounds and ability levels can feel successful in a self-selected knowledge-construction project. This information is encouraging, because the project is not a simple one to run: there is a lot of noise and activity and energy associated with it. I include the following quotes selected from student surveys to substantiate my point.

**From High-achieving Students**

*"I liked working on the computer better than just writing a report because we got to make scans and animation, etc."*

*"I would have given myself an A because I worked better with my partner than I expected (this was a girl-boy pair) and even though we had to delete our stack 5 times because we kept doing it wrong, we finally figured it out and did a nice job on it. I liked using sound effects for they gave life to the stack."*

*"I loved working on this because we didn't really need help and when everyone needs help, it's hard to get things done."*

**WHAT STUDENTS LIKED ABOUT THE PROJECT**

| Students perceived ability : | HIGH | MEDUIM | LOW | UNDER-ACHIEVER | LEP | TOTALS |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **TOPIC NOTED:** | | | | | | |
| HyperCard | 9 | 6 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 20 |
| Working in groups | 9 | 8 | 1 | 1 | | 19 |
| Subject choice | 4 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 13 |
| Using the computer | 8 | 8 | 5 | 1 | 3 | 25 |
| Able to be creative | 1 | 2 | | 1 | | 4 |
| Using laser disks | 5 | 1 | | | 1 | 7 |
| Scanning | 5 | | | | | 5 |
| Control over work | 2 | | | 1 | 1 | 4 |
| Working at own pace | 3 | | 1 | | | 4 |
| Using the CD encyclopedia | 1 | | | | | 1 |
| Saving paper | 1 | | | | | 1 |
| Creating animations | 2 | 1 | | 1 | | 4 |
| Total students in group: | 20 | 25 | 19 | 6 | 5 | 75 |

*"I liked this because it wasn't with the whole class so I could go at my own pace."*

*"I had a heck of a good time working on this HyperCard project! It was fun to make the animation, cards, scanned images, and videos on the stacks, and we learned a lot about Earthquakes and Volcanoes to boot! It was something like Infotainment—it was fun."*

**From Low-achieving Students**

*"I think our HyperCard stack looked good. I think that our study helped me learn."*

*"[I liked it] because you have more time to do something with it instead of being behind. I like HyperCard because you learn and have fun at the same time."*

**From "Typical" Students**

*"I liked having a partner because she knew things I didn't, but it got hard at times."*

*"I also prefer working with a partner rather than the whole class. I give myself an A because me and my partner did not fight, we switched on and off when we typed. We did very good complete work, and we were done early."*

*"I did like working on this computer/study project because it's like making your own little machine, and you press a button and there's animation, or quizzes or sound."*

**From Underachieving Students**

*"This was real fun. I liked working on the computer. The sound was real cool and so was the scanner."*

*"It was cool. I'm glad we didn't work with the whole class."*

*"I really enjoyed having to do whatever you want in your stack. Also you can be as creative as you want. I would give myself a B+ because I have worked really hard except I have had to erase more than half my stack because of error 1277."*

**From LEP Students**

*"I like working on the computer because it is fun to do projects on computer."*

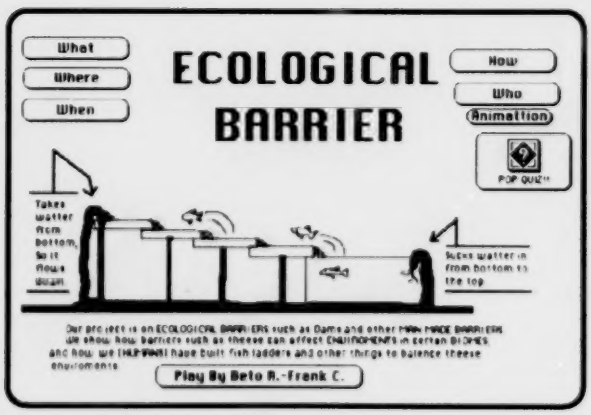
*"I like working in this computer and in this project because in this project I choose the topic I like or what I like to study."*

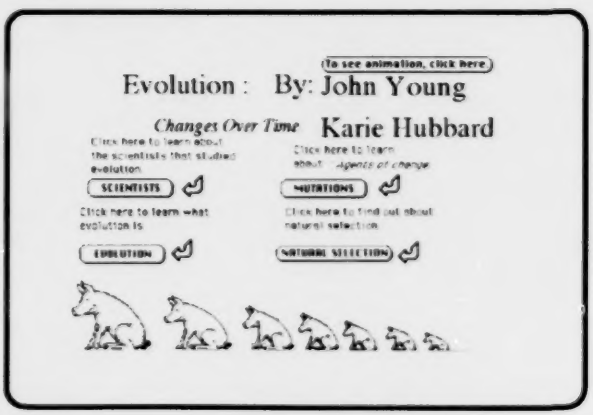
This multi-phase assessment process indicates that the project allowed students to:

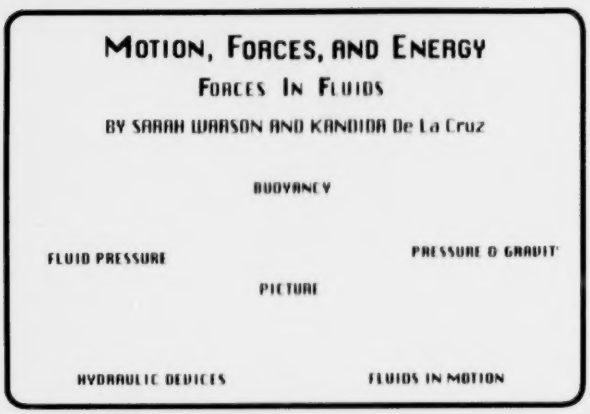
- gain new science knowledge
- master many technology-use skills
- design presentations
- enjoy their work.

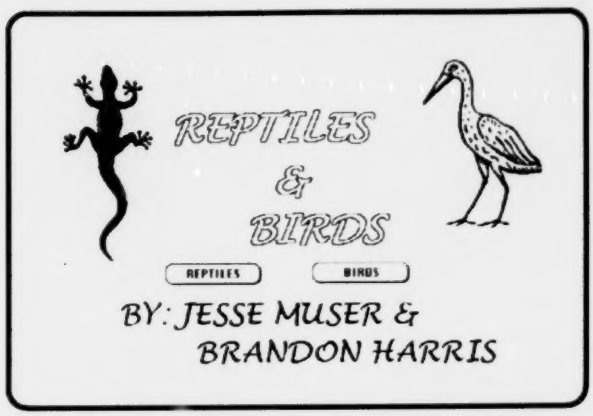
Because of their flexibility HyperCard, HyperStudio, and Linkway are valuable classroom software tools. They are fun for the students to use. They make using a variety of resources easy so that students can construct dynamic multi-media presentations. They respond to the interest and motivation of the user so that all students have access and all students enjoy success.

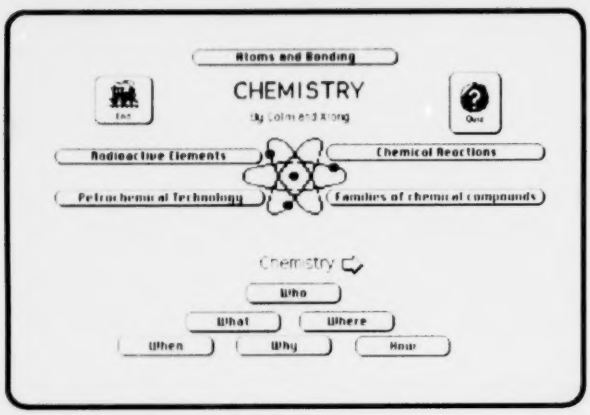
## Student Samples

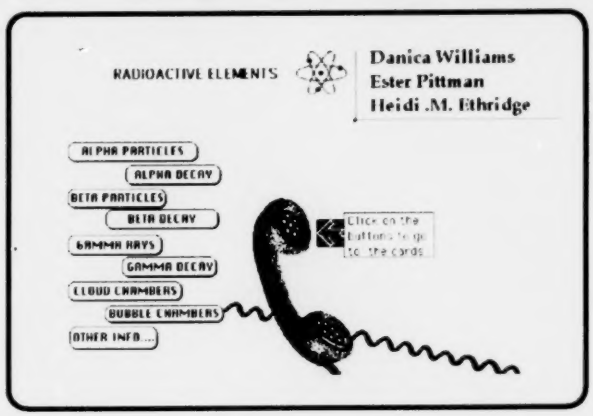




(To see animation, click here.)
Evolution : By: John Young
Changes Over Time Karie Hubbard
Click here to learn about the scientists that studied evolution.
SCIENTISTS
Click here to learn about agents of change.
MUTATIONS
Click here to learn what evolution is.
EVOLUTION
Click here to find out about natural selection.
NATURAL SELECTION




**Wiener**

*Continued from page 1*

Thirty years ago, Jeanne Delp, then Coordinator of the MGM (now GATE) program in the Garden Grove Unified School District designed a research process for primary gifted students which emphasized teaching them how to take notes. The format for this procedure repeated the same note-taking skill, changing the content and the degree of teacher guidance. By the time students finished this detailed practice, the skill was internalized. Those children never had to copy!

Thirty years later we are still using the procedure. Many of us have modified the original to fit our own style and have combined it with other research systems. But, in my opinion, never has a method cemented any research skill as well as this note-taking process which leads a child gently from total direction through a number of repetitions to eventual total independence.

With appreciation to Jeanne Delp (1927-1993) from all of us who learned this approach from her, here is the note taking section of Jeanne's research unit, modified periodically in italics by my own need for the dramatic or for clarification.

**Inspiration**

*For two weeks announce coming attractions: signs, newsletters, secret messages about the upcoming research unit placed around the room. Dress up as scholars on the day the unit starts.*

**Day 1**

*Define re-search, the idea of searching again and again for knowledge. Search and re-search for candies which have been hidden around the room. Research is a delicious adventure.*

The teacher introduces the idea of gathering multiple facts and ideas and using them to write a report. "We're going to find out all about bees and how they live, and we're going to begin with the most important bee of all, the queen bee."

There are already in the classroom a lot of books with information about bees—

more than one book per child (though this may include multiple copies of the same book.) The books have been marked with slips of paper so that information about the queen bee can be easily found. *Instead of slips of paper, tagboard cards can be used with page numbers for each kind of bee.* The books are distributed, the children read the marked places, trade books with one another as they finish until each child has looked at several reference books. The books are then collected. The time should be limited so that the children's attention is not sidetracked—about 10-15 minutes is usually right. *This can be done with a whole class, but working with a small group is more effective. However, this means that the lesson must be repeated with each group.*

Then the teacher goes to the board (or a piece of butcher paper, which can provide a longer lasting record of the note-taking process), writes the title, About The Queen Bee, and says, "What did you find out about the queen bee?"

> Bill : "The queen lays all the eggs. She lays about a hundred thousand at one time."
> Teacher: "How could I put that idea down here under About The Queen Bee in just a few words?
> Sue: "Lays a hundred thousand eggs in a day." The teacher writes this on the board.
> Teacher: "What else did you find out about the queen bee?"
> Ann: "The nurse bees feed her special food called royal jelly."
> Teacher: "How could I write that idea down in just a few words?"
> Bob: "Fed royal jelly by nurse bees."

The procedure of asking for information in broad questions, reducing the ideas to a few words verbally, then putting the selected words on the board is repeated until all the data about the queen bee has been given. *Abbreviating whole sentences can be difficult. Concrete examples can help:* ***The queen bee*** *lays* ***a*** *hundred thousand eggs* ***in*** *a day. Analyzing what should be deleted is very helpful.* The teacher may need to help with the abbreviated form at first and she may have to ask specific questions if the children do not provide all the information. Example: "Did anyone find out about the queen's mate?" The children may need to go back to the books, which is fine, then verbalize the answer and reduce it to the basic idea.

**Day 2**

The teacher, with all books set aside, will then direct the children's attention to the notations on the board.

> Teacher: "Bill, you gave us this idea." (Pointing to the words "lays a hundred thousand eggs in a day.") "What does that say?"
> Bill: (Reads the note exactly as it is written.)
> Teacher: "Now, who can add some words to these to make a longer sentence to complete the whole idea?"
> Karen: "The queen bee is the mother of the hive. She lays a hundred thousand eggs a day."

The teacher writes the sentence as Karen dictates it and continues by going first to the note and asking the child who supplied it to read it, adding words to make a complete sentence, and writing the sentence as it is dictated by the child until all or almost all of the notes have been used. The teacher may need to prompt at first to get the complete sentences from the notes until the children understand what is happening.

> Teacher: "Now, let's see if we have left any out. Did we use this idea—"lays a hundred thousand eggs a day?" (Children respond.) Did we use this idea—"fed by nurse bees?" (Children respond.) This continues until children have had their attention directed once again from the compressed ideas (notes) to the expanded ideas (sentences). The story is then read, and the children copy what they have written as a group about the queen bee. The titles and authors of the books have also been noted on the board, This particular step may need to be repeated several times on

successive days, depending upon the maturity of the group and how readily they take to condensing ideas.

**Day 3** The next step moves into individual experience with teacher leadership. The children can be seated around a large table or in seats facing the board (or butcher paper hung in some convenient place.)

Teacher: "Today we are going to find out about the worker bee." Books are again given to the children with places marked by the teacher. After each child has read several of the references, the teacher asks what they found out about the worker bee, and following the same technique as the first group experience, the notes are put on the board. (Be sure they don't get erased overnight.)

**Day 4** The next day the teacher returns to the notes and has each note verbalized into a complete sentence. After each note has been handled in this way, each child, with the teacher in close contact, uses the notes to write his own story of the worker bee.

**Day 5** On the next day the nurse bee is selected, the books are marked as before for easy information gathering, notes are verbalized but this time they are not written down by the teacher. Instead, each child writes his own notes, with close teacher supervision. Notes are shared at the end of the session.

Teacher: "Who will read us the first note you have on your paper?" (Child reads note.) "Will someone else who has that same idea written, read the way she put it down?" This whole procedure illustrates that there is no one correct wording of a note. What makes sense to the writer is what is correct, since it is he who will use the notes he has written.

**Day 6** On the next day the note papers are returned to the children. Each child, using his own notes and with the teacher in close contact to help with spelling, writes his own story of the nurse bee.

**Day 7** A new bee topic is selected, "The Beehive." Books are marked by the teacher before the groups meets. Each child reads and trades books, and after the books are collected, each child writes his own notes on the beehive, with teacher help and encouragement where it is needed.

**Day 8** The next day the notes are returned to the children and each child writes a story about the beehive with the teacher in close supervision.

**Day 9** Each of these bee topics has resulted in a paragraph of accurate sentences about that particular bee, and the next step is to put these papers together in book form. With teacher leadership, a table of contents is developed on the board as a sample, and then children look at their own books and make a table of contents. The teacher also discusses why a bibliography is important and shows how one is written.

This entire process can be repeated with different information as many times as the teacher feels is necessary for the children to internalize the basic idea of how to find information on a topic, how to write that information down in note form and then how to transform those notes back into sentences. The degree of repetition needed in a primary classroom seems more related to physical dexterity and maturity than intellectual ability. But all children benefit from additional note taking experiences on other brief topics before delving into their own independent research.

The beauty of this very detailed procedure is that it carefully addresses the note-taking aspect and gives the children hands-on practice. It has been used with primary children to introduce them to the whole field of research, and it can also be used (in a compacted and faster paced form) with upper grade students who are new to GATE.

The finest moment comes when college students return to tell us how well prepared they were for research at the college level—often mentioning that their primary research unit was the best possible introduction to this important skill.

**Elaine Wiener teaches a 1-2-3 GATE class in the Garden Grove Unified School District.**

glish, phonics, creative writing and research, which they complete as I meet with each reading group. Projects are also a basic part of our day, and the necessity for parental help becomes apparent.

Before launching into my Parent-Aide program, I send home a questionnaire asking for help in the classroom, both on a regular and a drop-in basis. If parents are able to assist, they specify the size of group they are comfortable with and if they have special skills they would like to share. This year I had a parent who played the piano and came in once a week for a "singing time" which enriched our music program. Another parent came once a week to work with the children at the computer, helping them with the PAWS keyboarding skills. Parents are a must for the musical the class puts on, since they help with scenery, costumes, and work backstage during the productions. Part of our reading program includes home and free time reading, and a parent will come in to listen to children tell about the books they have read and for which they receive points. Parents also help with reading projects such as a diorama or drawing which illustrates the story or perhaps help with a letter writing assignment which may expand on the reading assignment. Parents are also a big help with flash cards and times-table drill, and they can provide some "one-to-one time" for children who need extra help, reassurance, or just plain TLC. I usually have about fifteen parents who help on a fairly regular basis, and there is usually a parent in the class for part of every day. Parents are great resources for a multigrade class!

In addition, I use cross-age tutoring within the classroom which "multiplies" the teacher in some areas, and I have a strong system of classroom monitors who take the responsibility for routine classroom jobs, which gives me just that little bit more time for teaching.

Individualization is a concept which develops as the school year begins. Placement tests in a myriad of subject areas are given as I attempt to ascertain where each student is in a given subject and determine what I need to teach. We have many curriculum materials which promote this "challenge yourself" concept.

The development of the trait of cooperation is a part of our daily activities. We participate in the district "Writing as a Process" program, in which the students help one another to write a finished product. In science and social studies the students are encouraged to work in committees or small groups, and teamwork always evolves from such activities as physical education and music. The highlight of our unified spirit is our annual musical, usually written from a classic children's story.

The sense of responsibility that begins to evolve as the year progresses is an essential ingredient of teamwork, whether it's within a large family or a multigrade classroom. In addition to daily assignments, I also assign a weekly spelling contract as homework. Each student has an individualized list developed through student partners. Students are to "budget their time" for this homework, thus developing good study habits at an early age.

One of the most important outcomes which can be observed in a classroom of gifted students is that of a good self-concept. The students are able to observe that they are "normal" and not "different." The daily contact with other children who think as they think and enjoy the pursuit of the same interests solidifies a feeling of self-worth.

Managing a multigrade classroom is indeed a challenge. The responsibility I feel towards these students in giving them the educational background they deserve is awesome. However, the major ingredient of such a classroom, which is the students themselves, makes this opportunity a tremendously rewarding experience for me.

**Nancy Phillips teaches a 1-2-3- GATE class in the Garden Grove Unified School District.**

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Please share this copy of the *Communicator* with a friend when you have finished reading it. He or she might like to use this form to become a CAG member and active supporter of gifted education. Because of CAG's role in lobbying for appropriate education for gifted and talented students, dues payments to CAG are not tax deductible as charitable contributions for Federal income tax purposes.

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# COMMUNICATOR

# EMOTIONAL NEEDS OF THE GIFTED

## Painting Visions of the Future: Where Does Gifted Education Fit In?

by KAREN ROGERS

As the 1990's flow inevitable into the year 2000, prognostications about the future of almost everything—from objects and beliefs to practices and trends—are increasing in geometric progressions. And for practices and institutions with spotty histories of successful survival in the past, such prognostications become increasingly important. In preparation for this article, I skimmed three future trends books, thinking I would get loads of ideas about future education generally, but none of them made prognostications about the future of education at all. The one I felt was typical of this type of visioning was called *Future Vision: The 189 Most Important Trends of the 1990's*. In it there were chapters on population, politics, money, shopping, leisure, food, home health and fitness, media, environment and the workplace, but not one WORD devoted to trends in education. I'm not sure what that says. Is education not important enough to envision as a future set of trends, or is it so full of trends right now that no pattern emerges?

At any rate, that meant that I had better do some visioning of my own without books about the future to help me. In helping to plot my own trends about educating the gifted, I traced the case histories of two gifted children and one "school of the future" across the last 40+ years, trying to extrapolate from them about the future of gifted education. Here are the case studies on which to plot our trends and paint our future vision.

**CASE STUDY 1**

**School Years 1949-1986**

Kay entered school at 4 1/2 years of age. In first grade, she was allowed to read independently at her own pace, ultimately completing the 1-8 basal reading series by the beginning of grade 4. She skipped fifth grade. In grades 7 and 8, she was part of an enrichment program of creative dramatics, foreign language and typing. During high school she was placed in the "advanced track" for her major academic subjects, sharing only arts and sports classes with a heterogeneous mix of students. During the spring semester of her senior year, she enrolled in two history classes for college credit at the local junior college.

**Outcome:** Graduated with honors from a prestigious university, completed two master's degrees and a Ph.D, ultimately employed as a university professor.

**CASE STUDY 2**

**School years 1974-1986**

Jane entered first grade at 4 1/2 years. She was grouped for accelerated instruction in reading and mathematics through fifth grade. In middle school, she was placed in enriched mathematics, English, social studies and science. In eighth grade she took the SAT, scoring high, and subsequently attended a SMPY program of accelerated mathematics held at the local university; she received two years of high school math credit for one year's attendance. Likewise, in high school she was grouped for specific, advanced instruction in mathematics, English, social studies and science. She completed three years of German in one year by being allowed to progress at her own pace in that subject in her Sophomore year. She took the Advanced Placement exams in Calculus and English Literature

*Continued on page 30*

# PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

by MARTHA FLOURNOY

Meeting and dealing with the social and emotional needs of children is quite a challenge for both professionals and parents. Our Teacher Institutes provide an opportunity for educators to discuss a variety of issues concerning their gifted students, thus creating a support network. In my experience, there is a fairly large support network for parents when children are young, along with much literature written about developmental milestones, parenting strategies and other general information. As children grow older, so do needs and challenges. It is very important for parents to exchange ideas and strategies, both successful and not so successful, to pool ideas and resources and to brainstorm solutions to real problems or situations. Often parents feel alone and isolated, as if their child is the only child to experience a problem or a feeling.

This year our State Parent Council will be exploring a variety of models to facilitate practical, constructive and useful interaction between parents. We can learn from parents of older children who have lived and survived various challenges as well as gain perspectives on a variety of ages and stages. We can learn from research and literature concerning areas of interest. It is our hope to offer a time, a place and some structure to share and learn.

## Looking Ahead to the Annual Conference:

CAG's 33rd annual conference offers more than the usual fare! We've brought back classroom observations, of course–always a popular item and an early sell-out. The busses leave from the Conference Center at 8:00 A.M. and 8:30 A.M.

And this year, because we're in Oakland and close to so many wonderful museums, we've booked Friday morning workshops at the Lawrence Hall of Science in Berkeley and the Oakland Museum with its premiere exhibit of California history. An afternoon workshop is planned at the Exploratorium in San Francisco.

This year, CAG presents a Friday afternoon pre-conference seminar with Marian D. Diamond, Ph.D., educator, brain scientist, and Director of the Lawrence Hall of Science, University of California, Berkeley.

And at 4:00 P.M. CAG presents something new–a collegial seminar with two of the country's foremost scholars in the field of giftedness. Dr. Joseph Renzulli, the Director of the National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented, will discuss his work, *Schools for Total Talent Development: A Practical Plan for Total School Improvement.* And Professor Sally Reis, University of Connecticut, will discuss her work on Gifted Women and Girls. This is more than a book signing. It's a dialogue with two distinguished researchers. Come prepared!

Curious about Saturday and Sunday? Watch for a summary in the next issue of the *Communicator,* or study the brochure yourself. But register soon to save money. The early bird deadline is December 12, 1994.


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CAG encourages all interested parties to submit articles for publication. All submissions will be given careful consideration. Photos and camera-ready art work are particularly desirable. Student work should be accompanied by teacher's name and school. Send all material with your name, address, and phone number to Jean Drum, *Communicator* Editor, 7822 Belgrave Avenue, Garden Grove, CA 92641. You may phone Ms. Drum at 714/892-1745.

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# CALENDAR

November 9–13, 1994
**National Association For Gifted Children (NAGC) Conference,** Salt Lake City, Utah. For registration materials, call NAGC at 202/785-4268.

January 14, 1995
**Parent Outreach**, Century Plaza Hotel, Los Angeles. Outreach events are occasionally scheduled during meetings of the CAG Board of Directors. Parents convene at 8:00 A.M. for coffee, followed by a selection of informative sessions presented by CAG Directors. Adjourn at noon. Cost is a nominal $8 per person. To register, send your check to the CAG office, 426 Escuela Ave., Suite 19, Mountain View, CA 94040.

**CAG Demonstration Sites**
CAG has developed differentiated curricular units for use in demonstration sites throughout the state. CAG assists its demonstration schools with training and a stipend. You are cordially invited to attend one of the following demonstrations and watch differentiation in action.

November 16, 1994
**Bakersfield** - Stockdale High School. Contact Helen Felton at 805/665-2800, Ext. 23.

**Bakersfield** - West High School. Contact Joan Jacobs at 805/832-2822.

December 6, 1994
**Burbank** - Luther Burbank Middle School. Contact Donna Coffey at 818/558-4653.

January 26, 1995
**Los Angeles** - Euclid Avenue School. Contact Victoria Steinitz at 213/263-6792.

Watch future issues of the *Communicator* or the "Intercom" to learn the visitation dates for the following demonstration sites:
**Glendale** - Mountain Avenue Elementary School
**Sacramento** - Martin Luther King, Jr. Junior High School

March 3–5, 1995
**33rd Annual CAG Conference**, *Opening the World to Gifted Students*, Parc Oakland Hotel & Convention Center, Oakland, CA.

July 30–August 4, 1995
**11th World Conference on Gifted and Talented Children**, *Maximizing Potential: Lengthening and Strengthening Our Stride*, Hong Kong.

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# The Big Q—Intelligence or Industriousness?

by JEAN DRUM

Questioning the value of industriousness and responsibility in an individual surely ranks right up there with sneak attacks on mother and apple pie, but educators of the gifted may have to do just that.

The idea that intelligence (single or multiple), talents, abilities and other seemingly desirable qualities play an important role in education and success in school is being questioned, and good old-fashioned hard work is being touted as the only thing that really matters in the long run.

John Rosemond, a family psychologist from North Carolina, in a column in the *Fresno Bee* (August 22, 1994), writes, "At workshops nationwide, teachers are asked whether they disagree with the following statement: 'A child with an IQ of 95 who is respectful, responsible, and resourceful is a far better student than a child with an IQ of 165 who is deficient in those traits.' In close to 40 workshops, not one teacher has ever disagreed."

Mr. Rosemond wonders why, since teachers are "obviously aware" that respect for adult authority and perseverance have more to do with academic success than how smart one is, they continue to reinforce the notion that intelligence matters. He is also bothered by the thought that "quite a few high IQ kids have apparently been led to believe that they're entitled to good grades whether they earn them or not."

After this rather combative beginning, the rest of the article simply points out that children do better in school when they apply themselves, don't watch too much TV and have parents who care. Not many teachers would quarrel with that or with his catch words: respect, responsibility and resourcefulness.

But this thought that IQ (or whatever) is irrelevant to academic success and that only hard work matters is a very insidious challenge to programs for the gifted. Everyone can identify with effort, effort is good and moreover it is possible for everyone to put forth effort and work hard. Oh sure, type A workaholics are advised to slow down and get a life, but way down deep everyone is sure that s/he *could* work that hard. It's just that, well, there are other things in life, you know, and who needs an ulcer. Perseverance and dedication are regarded as choices, choices that anyone has the option to make, and that makes these qualities and the person who exemplifies them relatively unthreatening.

On the other hand, IQ (or "academic ability," "scholastic aptitude" or maybe we should call it "cranial enhancement") is perceived as an "either you have it or you don't" quality. That's hard for many people to take, particularly when this quality has long been regarded as the basis for success in school, and school is such a central part of everyone's early life. It's not hard to understand why people who feel (for whatever reason) that school, or some part of it, was difficult, that they could not please or satisfy a succession of teachers, and that this sense of failure (in whatever degree) in school may also have caused them to feel that their parents were not pleased with them, find the idea of academic success being an inherent quality hard to swallow. If Mozart were the Superintendent of Public Instruction and all success in school was based on musical ability which we are told is inborn and over which we have no control, we might very well feel the same way about music.

Perspective is what we need. Per-spective—*per* meaning completely, thoroughly or perfectly, and *spective* meaning to look at. We have to look at the entire school experience thoroughly and realize that a number of qualities are necessary for success, but no single one is sufficient.

Actually, what we generally consider to be intelligence as it is tested on an intelligence test is not *one* thing but a compendium of abilities such as vocabulary, short term memory, common sense, logic, perception. Those much maligned IQ test scores are an average of scores in a number of areas, so that even a "single" intelligence isn't really single at all. A person with a "high IQ" has demonstrated superior ability in a lot of these areas, but may well have a very low score in a particular sub-test. The thing to be said about a "high IQ" is that generally a person

whose test score puts him or her in that category demonstrates an overall average of aptitudes which is higher than that of the majority of people. It would seem to be obvious that a person with more ability than most people to succeed at solving problems that require thinking skills of various kinds has more potential to be successful in school, where thinking and remembering are the basis of most of what is taught. It would also seem obvious that these same skills are important in learning anything new, which of course includes everything we learn after we leave school and this same potential (important word) is an asset anywhere and anytime.

It is equally self-evident that a student who never tries to do anything, who has never been taught persistence or self-discipline, or who is lazy and arrogant will not be very likely to be a success—in school or anywhere else. Beethoven, Michelangelo, Shakespeare, Einstein, or Jackie Robinson were outstanding in their fields because they worked hard, very hard, at what they did. No educator advocating appropriate school experiences for gifted students is going to say that "brains" is all that matters or that a lazy, undisciplined genius is a great gift to society. At the same time, most of us could spend eighteen hours a day practicing the piano and never play like Rubinstein, paint our hearts out and never produce a masterpiece like Rembrandt, or weight train seven days a week and never make the starting line-up of Notre Dame.

Our great challenge as educators of the gifted is to take these children who do have better than average talents and abilities and help them want to use them to the max. We need to show them that effort is fun and satisfying, that self-discipline, far from being a drag, leads to success and fulfillment. We must prove that being responsible actually makes people popular and respected, not nerds. We should help them realize that this is true for everyone in every area of life. The goal: a high $I^2Q$—Intelligence times Industriousness Quotient.

Quang Tran, Age 10
Patton School, Garden Grove Unified School District



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# The View From Sacramento

**Instructional Grouping, Gifted and Talented Education, and Advanced Classes**
**A Policy Statement from the California State Board of Education**

Our children's talents are our most precious resource. Every student has the potential to learn in every subject area, and each student's potential must be nurtured in order to ensure that California's students are as well prepared in every arena as students from around the world. This State Board of Education policy statement reaffirms the importance of ensuring that every student is challenged to reach his or her potential and charges local educational agencies to re-examine policies and procedures to make sure that all students, including gifted and advanced learners, are provided with rigorous educational opportunities commensurate with their accomplishments and needs.

**Discussion**

California's schools serve the most diverse student population in the world. With a broad range of cultural, academic, economic and linguistic characteristics defining the population, California's students present a rich array of interests and needs. Gifted and talented students mirror the larger society; they may speak no English or several languages; they may live in neighborhoods racked by poverty or marked by affluence; they may excel in every subject or be eligible for special education services and gifted and talented education at the same time. However, they have one common characteristic: the ability to perform at remarkably high levels of accomplishment in one or more areas when assessed against others of their age, experience or environment.

All students deserve an education that challenges each one to be the best that he or she can be. We should realize each student's potential, including students with outstanding gifts or talent potential. Just as underachieving students need supportive intervention, so the most advanced students should receive careful attention and program planning to ensure that they are provided opportunities to stretch and extend their knowledge and skills. No limits should ever be set on how much or how fast students may learn. Instead, educators should seek to raise the overall level of attainment of all students, including those who are already performing above grade level, add to the existing number and variety of advanced and honors classes and opportunities and increase the number of students who succeed in such classes. Educators should aim for academic excellence for all students, not simply academic adequacy.

There is convincing evidence that many students do not perform as well as they could because they are not presented with a challenging curriculum. Recent national reports illustrate the difficulty of meeting the needs of our gifted and advanced learners:

*"American education is now at a turning point—one that requires us to reach beyond current programs and practices. As the nation strives to improve its schools, the concerns of students with outstanding talents must not be ignored. International tests comparing American students with those in other countries show that students at all levels of achievement are not performing as well as students in many other countries. It is clear that many more American students must learn complex material, and to do this they must work harder...All of our students, including the most able, can learn more than we now expect...Most gifted and talented students spend their school days without attention paid to their special learning needs. Recent studies show that gifted and talented elementary school students have mastered from 35% to 50% of the curriculum to be offered in five basic subjects before they begin their school year. Most regular classrooms make few, if any, provisions for talented students..."* (*National Excellence: A Case for Developing America's Talent*, forward by Richard Riley and page 2. Office of Educational Research and Improvement, October 1993, U.S. Department of Education, 202-783-5019.)

Another recent report, *Prisoners of Time*, concludes that students in other post-industrial democracies receive twice as much instruction in core academic areas in high school, even though the total number of instructional hours is about the same, and that education abroad is built around higher expectations for what students can and should be able to do. This report urges schools to transcend the limits of current school structures and organizations, such as grouping by age and rigid 50-minute period scheduling, and consider flexible scheduling and grouping practices which would be more conducive to learning and teaching. (*Prisoners of Time. Report of the National Education Commission of Time and Learning.* 202-653-5019.)

California's reform movement has centered around raising academic standards for all students, as well as improving both access to the core curriculum and the quality of curriculum and instruction in all subjects. We have made great strides in these areas. We have urged schools to eliminate remedial, dead-end tracks and employ more heterogeneous grouping strategies, while at the same time maintaining flexibility in grouping practices to meet special needs. More students than ever before are engaged in challenging studies in every area of the curriculum. Many students who once would have enrolled only in "remedial" courses are now successful in core academic classes. Support services, such as counseling and tutorial services, are available for many students experiencing difficulty in the core curriculum. Participation in advanced placement, international baccalaureate, and honors courses has increased, especially participation by underrepresented minority students. Although our work is by no means finished, we have made very significant advances in establishing the expectation that all students can learn and in providing opportunities for them to do so.

Regrettably, interest in the benefits of heterogeneous grouping as a tool to facilitate the learning of students in some situations has been interpreted to mean that advanced learners should never be grouped together or that they should be held back to assist less proficient learners. This is *not* our intent! Appropriate and adequate educational services for all children cannot be obtained by identical services for all. The particular educational and developmental needs of each student, including the gifted and talented student, are ignored when efforts provide only for uniform educational experiences for all. Differentiated experiences and services are especially necessary in the context of educating all children when those children come to us with differing needs. Increasing our efforts to develop the talents of all students requires that we give some specific attention to the needs of each student, including those with outstanding or unusual gifts of talent potential. We encourage districts to explore appropriate grouping and organizational procedures rather than to dogmatically install heterogeneous grouping for all situations, even when that approach might be inappropriate. Grouping is a strategy to use to increase learning, not an end in itself. Heterogeneous grouping is one organizational procedure, but other grouping patterns may be appropriate as determined by the needs of the students. Students should be grouped, and regrouped, according to their needs, interests and abilities.

The goal of the State Board of Education is to dramatically increase the number of students who can successfully complete advanced course work. We are urging schools and districts to include as many students in advanced learning opportunities at all grade level as can be successful in them. The Education Code and related regulations allow school districts a wide variety of grouping and instructional options for all learners. School districts should take advantage of this flexibility and adopt instructional approaches and design environments that encourage all students to improve their achievement through involvement in rich and rigorous curriculum that is modified when necessary to build on students' previous accomplishments.

**Recommendations**

1) No state or local policy should be adopted which inhibits students from access to curriculum and instruction which provide appropriate challenges.

2) The identification and nurturing of talent potential is the central responsibility of the entire school system and an integral part of the process of schooling. Local education agencies should continue to search for talent potential in all students, with particular attention to economically disadvantaged and underrepresented minority students, and they should provide support so that these students can be successful in advanced learning opportunities. Local educational agencies must provide adequate and appropriate educational opportunities for all students, including those with unusual potential for or already demonstrated outstanding achievement, whether or not they receive any special funding to do so.

3) Local education agencies should look at the individual needs of each student and make accommodations in schedules or procedures when those will facilitate the learning of a student or a group of students. For example, a student should be permitted to demonstrate that material is too easy for him or her, and if that is the case, should be enrolled in the next course, clustered with a group of students with similar needs or provided with an individualized program at the appropriate level of difficulty. Alternative learning opportunities should be designed for students who have already mastered portions of the curriculum.

4) All students should have access to the core curriculum, but they need not all master it at the same pace, in the same way or in the same order. Local educational agencies should look carefully at ideas such as "curriculum compacting" (squeezing a year-long course into six months by eliminating the simplest material), the Joplin plan (students of similar achievement levels are grouped together regardless of age), summer or intersession studies, joint secondary/post-secondary enrollment for students, and other flexible grouping practices that allow us to meet the needs of all students, including those with unusual talents or gifts.

5) Local educational agencies should establish high-level learning opportunities in every area of the curriculum, including mathematics, science, English-language arts, history/social science, the arts, and physical education. In addition to the regular classroom, the entire community should be looked at as a resource, so that students might further their studies in places such as libraries, museums, laboratories, universities, the work place, on the Internet and in special classes or schools.

# The IQ Controversy and the Gifted

by ABE TANNENBAUM

IQ bashing has been popular and widespread. Some criticisms have been fair and appropriate; others—particularly in popular media—simply have distorted reality. Certainly, the demise of IQ is exaggerated; IQ instruments are valid and useful in measuring some of the most vital aspects of intelligence.

Criticism of the IQ's legitimacy stems, in part, from the belief in the mind as an *open system*, that is, everybody can capitalize on equality in order to achieve, given the proper amount of willpower and opportunity. Unfortunately, little is known about how wide open the system (i.e., "mind") is, and less is known about how to take advantage of it to the fullest extent. What are the strategies for activating the capacity in any person, *selected at random*, to measure up to the likes of a Stephen Hawking or of a Leonardo? Nobody can address either question expertly at this time. However, all agree that any neglect of the mind's open system compromises democracy's open society.

The public attitudes to which the media cater are often suspicious of the *legitimacy* of any measure which purports to forecast future achievement, as if the test were controlling destiny. There is an undercurrent of popular feelings—which may be reflected or exploited in the media—that IQ "acts" like the hand of Fate, dictating what persons as young as age five can and cannot become in later years within not-too-broad limits. Others counter by arguing that if enough can be measured in human intellect to predict who does and who does not stand a chance of some day puttering around with fractals, better that it be known as early as possible in the child's life so that parents and teachers can deal with that fact.

One popular distortion has to do with test norms. However we view Terman's commitment to democracy, we must acknowledge his bequeathing to us a conviction, thus far unassailed, that all human beings are brothers and sisters under the normal curve in scholastic aptitude and performance. Through no fault of Terman's or any other well-intentioned psychometrician, the mean has become something of a fetish, a standard by which to judge the legitimacy of the school curriculum and of children's success in it. As a result, schools spotlight the middle of the ability distribution, while the upper extremes remain pretty much in the dark.

Lay concerns and feelings about legitimacy are reinforced by the assertions of some prestigious commentators who question the *validity* of IQ; they argue that it doesn't serve its prognostic or diagnostic purposes.

Perhaps no other charge has diminished IQ testing in many communities more than the arguments and supportive evidence that some minority groups are short-changed by scores that appear unfairly deflated. Indeed, collectively, the disadvantaged do perform less well than the advantaged in our society. This is intolerable because it further stigmatizes the have-nots as intellectually inferior to the haves. Any test that distinguishes between *individual* capacities is acceptable, except to strict egalitarians; if it records differences between social, ethnic, or economic *groups*, it is considered prejudicial and therefore intolerable.

Several approaches have attempted to eliminate or correct for the differences associated with socio-economic conditions, including Cattell's so-called "Culture Fair" test and Mercer's System of Multicultural Pluralistic Assessment (SOMPA). On a different track, Lorge (1953) argued that the social system rather than the test instrument is guilty of prejudice, not only against racial and socio-economic minorities, but also against groups classified by sex, age, education, geographic origin and mental health. Test scores, including IQ, are sensitive to these differences. As such, they represent one of the *consequences*, not *causes*, of prejudices in our society by showing that its victims are denied a fair chance to achieve excellence. In other words, the test is only a reflector of bias against minorities. Just as destroying the reflector of a flame cannot snuff out the flame, so it is naive and futile to assume that social bias can be affected by revising or eliminating the test that reflect it.

Yet, there is an alternative approach for dealing with bias in testing, and that is to make radical changes in the way the test is administered, as suggested by Fuerstein (1979). His Learning Potential Assessment Device (LPAD) includes actual simulations of sections in IQ

instruments, but the examiner's radically changed behavior during the testing session makes all the difference. By this stretching disadvantaged children's minds toward their upper limits, a new criterion for mental potential emerges. It is the examinee's peak performance, not the highest leveled-off habituated competence, that denotes his or her potential.

This system of testing acknowledges the validity of cognitive operations required in conventional mental measures as keys to success in our real, though imperfect, world. Until the world changes for the better, it will be necessary to leave undoctored the existing tests which predict achievement in that world, albeit imperfectly. Mediational methods can at least give the disadvantaged a leg-up in the test situation and in the real world, although *both* are flawed.

It may come as a surprise to readers of this think-piece that no mention is made of nature versus nurture in accounting for IQ differences among individuals and even between groups. In our current state of ignorance, there is no point in musing about which of the two poorly understood forces, heredity and environment, carries greater weight in an IQ score which is in itself imperfect in its reliability and validity.

To me, it is a non-issue, an exercise in sophistry that has no practical meaning. Furthermore, I believe that, in general, nature-nurture debates are masquerades for political disagreements today as much as they were in 1949, when Pastore found that those who believe in the greater power of environment are liberal in their convictions whereas conservatives tend to place their bets on heredity. From a strictly social-psychological point of view, nature and nurture are like two hands working together to produce a clapping sound. What each contributes is not additive to the other's contribution; instead, the two hands work interactively, since neither can create the sound alone. Because of this interdependence, it is unimportant to ask which hand is more responsible for the loudness of the clap. Strengthen either one and the sound is sure to become louder. The same is true for the mutual reinforcement of nature and nurture in producing intelligent behavior.

So, although a certifiable IQ basher, unlike other critics, I have no problems with IQ, *objectively*. I don't see it quite as infallible as some of its protagonists do, and I don't see it quite as blemished as its antagonists do. But there are so many all-or-nothing distortions of this kind that I am uneasy about the way it has been *used* and *abused*, rather than about its *usefulness*. Yet frankly, I *do* see a monster in the IQ, not for what it is, but for what people make of it. The Frankenstein, in this case, is *not* the test constructor; instead, it is the more-than-occasional educator or psychologist who interprets the IQ score.

Despite all of its imperfections, the IQ is still very much "alive" in talent searches. It has the advantages of being as predictive as any power measure can be for success in the early years in school. None of the alternatives has either succeeded or has enough of a track record to replace it for children who are not yet of school age or even already in their early years of schooling.

Yet, there is something disturbing about the IQ's success, through no fault of those who designed it. The test has preserved several kinds of complacency in the educative process. First, I suspect that educators would rather live with predictive validity in unchanging (therefore predictable) learning environments than risk weakening the IQ's validity by enriching the environments, especially for gifted children. Second, IQ's have been used to maintain, as top priority, those kinds of ability that the instrument measures, while shortchanging other abilities; educators may thus be reluctant to expand our vision to include thought processes and content areas that are timely and critical at the close of the twentieth century. Third, widespread reliance on IQ testing fails to assess special abilities. By defining giftedness primarily in terms of IQ, we perpetuate the myth that young children's intellect resembles some kind of blob of general ability to be channeled later in life. Fourth, it is comfortable to think that an IQ score denotes fixed-forever potential. Finally, the IQ preserves our tendency to assume that *demonstrated* productivity or performance depends entirely on mental power and process. Contrastingly, research shows clearly that, in addition to general intelligence, contributors to achievement include special aptitudes, non-intellective facilitators, environmental influences and chance or just plain luck.

Perhaps to look beyond intellect as the *only* cause of gifted behavior involves assuming broader perspectives than many professionals are prepared to consider. In the end, IQ will continue to survive despite attacks, probably because it is easier to live with the proven qualities of IQ scores than to take on the daunting responsibility of making meaningful improvements.

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# How To Live Successfully With Your Gifted Youngster

by JUDY ROSEBERRY

High level intelligence makes demands upon the gifted youngster. Behaviors result from these demands. This certainly has implications for those of us who live with or teach bright young people.

In the school setting we can develop a program and a curriculum to meet these "demands" or characteristics of the gifted student. At home it is quite a different matter. The same characteristics take on a different look.

While there are many characteristics of the gifted youngster, six have been selected here to demonstrate the point and to show the difference between those behaviors at home and at school.

### 1
### A Craving For Knowledge

Gifted kids want to know!!! They are curious and want to be in on everything that's going on. At school they want to know why the teacher does certain things, why some children seem to have different assignments, or why the teacher and other adults behave the way they do.

At home this same craving for knowledge takes on the personal tone of the family and questions are quite different. "How much money is in the checking account?" or "What were you and Dad arguing about last night?" Questions are not always asked in the appropriate or socially acceptable manner. The questions sometimes seem inappropriate for the age of the child. The questions can frequently be asked at difficult times or in front of other people.

Something says to the gifted youngster... "Find out!!" They need to be involved in family issues and decisions as much as possible. They crave the answers, the solutions and the understanding of the family structure. Even though they seem too young to know about or care about the light bill, the impending divorce of relatives or the problems affecting the economy, they often are very aware and have only their parents to turn to for answers.

### 2
### High Standards For Themselves

Gifted youngsters have high standards for themselves. This is not always evident in how they keep their rooms and belongings or how neat their work is when submitted to the teacher.

Some students have such high standards for themselves they choose not to turn in work for fear that it will be found less than acceptable. Coming to grips with their own standards is a difficult task for some of our youngsters.

It is also difficult for them when we force adult standards upon them. A room cleaning done by an eight-year- old will seldom satisfy an adult. The standards of behavior that we expect from our children take time to develop and become a part of the child's way of life. We need to be very careful to stay aware of the sensitive nature of the child and how they view our critique of their work, their cleaning attempts, or their responses to happenings around them.

### 3
### Question Generalizations and Challenge Authority

Something in the gifted youngsters tells them to question generalizations or challenge authority. This happens in the home or at school and in other parts of the child's community. It's safer to do this questioning at home, so parents receive most of it. Teachers are not protected from this characteristic of the gifted learner. They are frequently challenged or questioned during the teaching day. Some of the questions are personal and have nothing to do with academics because gifted kids want to know *everything* that is going on.

These students need to be trained with very specific direction, so that they will learn to challenge and question in a socially acceptable manner. They do not come with automatic courtesy and politeness in this area of their lives.

### 4
### Long Attention Span and Ability to Concentrate

Gifted youngsters have a need to concentrate and have longer blocks of time for working and thinking. Their hearing is an interesting phenomenon to consider. They sometimes seem unable to hear a parent or teacher when directions are being given. Indeed sometimes they are far away in a thought pattern that helps them tune out the rest of the world. Sometimes they hear the parents or teachers, but give award winning performances of "not hearing."

They can be totally absorbed at times. On the other hand they also seem to be able to hear their name mentioned from the other end of the house when the discussion does not include them.

5

**Need to Express Thoughts, Ideas and Feelings**

Our brightest youngsters need the opportunity to express themselves. This does not mean only in the arts. This means we must provide homes and classrooms where students are free to express ideas and thoughts even when those ideas and thoughts are unusual or "off the wall."

Sometimes students who do this seem argumentative to parents or teachers. This is closely related to questioning authority. They need to have safe places to question what is and suggest why it might be. They need patient listeners even when the ideas seem unusual or destined for failure. The truly creative thinker may seem so unusual to those around the classroom or home that he or she is dismissed as a "dreamer" or worse yet, "a weirdo." Reflect upon how our way of life has been impacted by such dreamers or creative thinkers.

It is critical for homes and classrooms to make room for such thinkers. It is fearsome to consider that we may lose some brilliant solutions to problems or miss out on original thought because we are too busy or because we do not know how to value the creative thinker.

The youngsters need to learn how to present ideas, how to frame questions and how to get done what must be done to bring their thoughts and ideas to fruition. We must plan to teach them how to present themselves, how to convince people, how to persuade, how to lead from an ethical base of knowledge.

6

**Seeking Others Like Themselves Intellectually**

The gifted reach out to others like themselves intellectually. This can cause problems when students seek out older friends, or even adults in some cases, to enjoy similar hobbies, activities and conversations. This is where parents must step in, make decisions based on their knowledge of the youngster and the activities involved. It is not always appropriate for younger children to be involved with older children, regardless of their intellectual ability. Standards in the home must be clearly understood and parents must stand firm about rules and regulations of the family.

Young people must be treated with respect and courtesy. They must learn to offer the same in return. Parents must be careful not to give in to their youngsters merely because their are bright and verbal and able to make a good argument. They need strong parenting to go along with high ability and potential.

**Judy Roseberry is former GATE Coordinator for the Garden Grove Unified School District and is now an elementary principal in that district.**

**My Life**

When I awake in the morning,
I weigh eight pounds.
By 9 o'clock,
I'm walking all around.
By noon I have learned
My very first word
By dinner I'm through college
and had my first Byrd.
When bedtime appears,
I fall asleep,
In my grave of memories
I will always keep.
In other words life's too short.

Annie Byrd, Age 10
Patton School
Garden Grove Unified School District

# Parents and Professionals as Partners: A Psychologist's View

by NANCY M. ROBINSON, Ph.D.

As a psychologist who works with families of gifted children (in my state, known officially as *highly capable children*) I'm witness to a great many battles between home and school that could and should have been avoided. In my view, a very high priority needs to be given to establishing a working partnership among parents and all the other adults—from bus drivers and Little League coaches to teachers and principals—who share responsibility for children. Whether or not these adults are doing a good job, whether or not they are able and/or willing to be flexible in meeting children's needs, whether they are personally suited to do what should be done—in terms of ability, knowledge, energy, creativity, or leadership—affects how *hard* your task may be but doesn't affect its *importance*. Parents' priority is in promoting their children's welfare, and the only way to assist rather than to detract from that process is to set up a positive partnership, with the stress on *positive*.

I was saddened recently by a letter I received from the father of a child I had seen in my clinic. He happened to have been a high-school teacher of two of my own children. He wasn't the best teacher they ever had, but he was far from the worst. He recalled an incident, at least 20 years before, in which my husband and I had, in casual conversation, thanked him for his efforts on behalf of our children. He said that such "strokes" didn't come very often. This good and honest man deserved more strokes, more parents acting in partnership. He isn't a teacher any longer; I can guess why.

For the sake of simplifying matters and because teachers spend so much time on the front line, let's talk about partnerships with teachers. Everything else here holds true for your relationships with other adults as well—in schools, in clinics, in scout troops, in Little League, in music lessons or gymnastics, whatever.

First, you need a mantra, something to repeat over and over to yourself. It might go like this:

This person sincerely wants to help my child.
This person is doing his/her best.
This person sees the world—and my precious offspring—from a different perspective than I do.
This person and I can negotiate.
*This person is my PARTNER!*

The first two parts of this mantra are givens. They don't say that this person is doing a superb job, only that the person is trying. And this is very likely to be the case. People don't go into teaching for the money, to be sure, nor do pediatricians, child psychologists, or scoutmasters. There's not a lot of prestige connected with these positions and there aren't many perks. People choose these careers because they like children (and maybe even like parents), because they see the formative years as being significant, because they want to make a contribution to the lives of others.

And then they do try. But of course there are barriers to their accomplishing everything they hope for. They may not have a natural talent for teaching; in any case, all teachers have to work at it. They may be discouraged by how drained they feel at the end of the day. They may have so many troubled children to deal with, and children who have trouble learning, that they can hardly attend to anyone else. They may have troubles at home and their own children to care for. It's a reasonable assumption that most people do their best, most of the time, teachers included.

**Different Perspectives on Children's Behavior**

There are a number of reasons why your child's teacher may have a different perspective of the situation than you do, aside from the stressful factors above. Children sometimes act very differently at home and at school. The child who is lively and interesting in a child-centered home may have trouble being a follower in a large group; conversely, the child who chats away comfortably at home may be shy or withdrawn in a busy classroom. Your "angel" may become bored, inattentive, and irritated, clown around, refuse to do work that seems babyish, and even miss out on work that is more challenging. One four-year-old was brought to my clinic because her preschool teachers feared she was autistic; she sat, speechless, doing the same four-piece fruit puzzle day after day. What was wrong with this highly gifted child was the lack of fit with the preschool environment and her subsequent deep discouragement. Once placed appropriately, she

became the sunny, enthusiastic, creative, and curious little girl in school that she had been at home.

The high-energy, actively curious child can be trying indeed in a group, leading the teacher to suspect *hyper*activity. And, furthermore, the bright child—even a sedentary bright child—uses up regular class assignments and special projects, anything the teacher introduces, at an amazing rate. More advanced resources may not be readily available, especially as the child approaches the upper grades of the school. Pretty soon, your child begins to be seen as a burden, and things go from bad to worse.

Children's natural temperament and sensitivities can also look very different in a group setting than at home. The best-hearted of bright children is likely to have to cope with incessant irritation at the slow pace of things and see their slower-learning classmates as "unwilling to listen" as the teacher goes over and over the same point until they get it. Some children are used to criticism and not getting things right the first time; bright children unused even to temporary defeats may be crushed by a remark that another child would take in stride, or may be outraged by a teacher's remark to a classmate.

A teacher may be well pleased by a performance that leaves you and your child lukewarm, accusing your child of being "perfectionistic." High standards—both yours and your child's—are absolutely essential to getting anywhere significant in life; a child deserves a chance to celebrate a fine performance that results from really hard work. Since a teacher is likely to see "perfectionism" as neurotic and conscientiously to try to discourage it, your child may well be caught in the middle, may be seen as uppity, demanding, and unwilling to be a child. Perfectionism can be a trap, in fact, when children avoid opportunities that fall outside their areas of "instant expertise," but high standards alone are not neurotic!

Bright children's social relationships may also look different to a teacher than to the children themselves. For example, because they realistically see themselves as different and because everyone is "supposed to" be the same, bright children may conclude that there is something wrong with them and try desperately to be just like everyone else. Or, despite getting along well with classmates, they may feel lonely and isolated because they long for more mature friendships (more intimacy, more loyalty, more long-term stability) than their agemates are able to give.

Finally, because bright children are likely to be teased as "nerds" or worse, too many of them do learn to be what I think of as "professional victims." This situation can be exacerbated if parents fall into the trap as well, blaming other children and teachers rather than teaching coping skills. At all costs, parents need to teach their children not to fall into the victim role, to develop calluses, to respond with strength and dignity, and to keep an independent view of themselves as strong problem-solvers.

### Different Perspectives on You!

Unbelievably, a teacher may see you, the dedicated, selfless, and supportive advocate, as "pushy!" You, your spouse, and your children know that you aren't pushing; you are running to keep up! Some of the responsibility for your child's advanced development is yours, of course—take credit for it—but at the same time, remember to be the partner!

### Different Perspectives on Children's Development

Teachers and principals want the best for your children, but they may view development from a different perspective. They may sincerely believe, for example, that "age is everything," and that it is inevitably socially and emotionally harmful to children to be placed with older students. They may expect gifted children to be perfect and see any problem (even short stature) as enough to scuttle accelerative solutions. They may believe that early giftedness is only transient, not a predictor of things to come. And, with today's school reforms, they may mistakenly see both ends of the normal curve as mirror images, concluding that if inclusion is good for slower children it must also be good for the brightest. I would disagree with all these assumptions, but I respect the honest and generous conviction with which they are held.

### What You Can Do at Home

As a partner with the school, there is much you can do at home to help your child to adopt habits and expectations that make for excellence in school achievement. You can (and should) play an authoritative parenting role—don't be a dictator, but don't be a laissez-faire parent. Establish rules and keep them; don't get into endless battles about issues. You can always negotiate rule changes—for next time. Help your child not only to respect but to trust adults, to assume that rules matter, to hold high standards for themselves, to do their homework promptly and well, to plan ahead, to seek further goals above and beyond those assigned in class. Try to find an area in which your child shows talent and encourage him or her to reach for excellence through long-term commitment and practice. Children who come from families with high expectations but simultaneous warm support tend to realize their talents to a degree that other children do not.[1]

And, above all, do *not* criticize teachers at home. Let your children know that you are willing and happy to try to improve the situation and that every teacher has many competing agendas to balance—but don't criticize teachers' skills or good will in front children! I tested a seven-year-old recently who told me, "The school system is not meeting my needs, and neither is my teacher." I wonder where he heard that!

You may need to do a good deal of interpreting to your children of the situation they're facing. It may seem obvious to you, for example, that some youngsters (yours) are ready to move ahead faster than the others because they have the school-wise ability, not just the will, but even bright children don't always understand this. Your pre-

teen or adolescent may be feeling that being different is being wrong, and need your perspective and support. It is especially important, when children move into more challenging situations than they are used to, such as special classes, that their parents let them know that being top of the class is not necessary to their mental health and that, indeed, the disorientation they are feeling is a natural response to being—at last—with "real peers."

**What You Can Do at School**

Aside from the real contributions you can make by volunteering your time and skills at your children's schools, you need to develop a full set of negotiating skills to help the school achieve an optimal match between your children's readiness to learn and what is offered and expected. Take the position that you are not asking for a *better* education for your children (and don't ask for smaller classes, better trained teachers, or more expensive resources than other classes have) but the *most appropriate* match from among the resources available in the system.

Let me recommend a slim volume about negotiating skills in which you are bound to find something helpful: Roger Fisher and William Ury's *Getting to Yes: Negotiating agreement without giving in.*[2] Most people, as these authors point out, think they must be "hard bargainers" in order not to be taken for softies or pushovers. As a consequence, they tend to force others into taking and defending positions rather than agreeing upon a common goal and moving toward it. These authors suggest a number of steps in the negotiating process that focus on the objectives, help people to understand one another's assumptions and problem-solve rather than taking intractable positions, and fine-tune matters as they go along. They suggest that the effective negotiator is a "principled negotiator."

It may be helpful to ask for a conference with a teacher early in the school year, to establish goals and to brainstorm about possibilities that may be both feasible and helpful. Before the conference, sit down with a pencil and paper and list several possibilities, such as compacting[3] the year's curriculum so that a child needn't spend time with material already mastered; more advanced computer work or special programs offered by satellite; independent assignments that call for greater depth than the ordinary curriculum; (for older students) completing a correspondence course; spending part of the day with a more advanced class; even skipping a grade. Teachers will probably have other possibilities you haven't thought of. You can also help children avert boredom by assuring that they always have with them an interesting and relatively challenging nonfiction book to read when they have finished their seat work correctly.

If you do have an idea you'd like to see the school try, especially if it is a significant change like grade-skipping, it is often wise to ask for a trial for, say, six weeks or to Halloween, followed by a telephone or in-person conference. Such experimentation won't back into a corner or ask a long-term commitment of teachers who see the move as risky; indeed, if it doesn't work, you'll have gained good information. And, furthermore, your child will understand that the step is an experiment to be learned from, and that they themselves are not committed for the rest of their lives to a move about which they may have some misgivings, too. (Most self-respecting children are convinced that they are supremely lucky to have been born in just the place and time to have the friends they do, and are scared silly to contemplate making new ones.)

If glitches do occur in the ordinary course of things, or in the course of one of your experiments, again, ask for a conference. Try to find things to praise about your child's experience with the teacher. Describe, non-critically, what you've been hearing at home and ask for the teacher's perceptions and, most especially, for feedback and advice. Maybe there's something you can do at home to help. Maybe another experiment is in order. Then do what you can to make the plan work.

For example, a child moving ahead a grade may need some coaching in social skills and expectations. And you may need to adjust your own expectations about your child's behaviior—increase privileges, decrease restrictions—to match his or her older classmates. And all children need the social skills of self-advocacy. Teachers listen much more readily to unhappy children than to "pushy" parents! But remind your child to say please and thank you!

**Compromises**

One of the cruel realities of life is that there is no perfect world for the child who does not fit the norm. Some solutions have more advantages than others, but it is impossible to have it all. For example, one cannot match a bright child with mental age and community-representative age peers simultaneously (unless that community is very restricted). Each family has its own priorities, and no one solution is best for everyone.

Parents need to know that whatever their choices, none will meet *all* the needs of the children. Sometimes combinations will work (e.g., a special class for gifted children supplemented by a scout troops and a soccer league), but they will not be perfect. To be frank, most children don't have perfect parents either. The best one can do is try, and for a parent just as for a child, pretty much the best one can do is quite enough.

**Footnotes**

[1]Csikszentmihalyi, M., Rathunde, K., & Whalen, S. (1993). *Talented teenagers: The roots of success and failure.* Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

[2]Fisher, R., & Ury, W. (1981). *Getting to Yes: Negotiating agreement without giving in.* New York: Penguin.

[3]Reis, S.M., Burns., D.F., & Renzulli, J.S. (1992). *Curriculum compacting: The complete guide to modifying the regular curriculum for high ability students.* Mansfield Center, CT: Creative Learning Press.

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# What Would Happen If...

## We Ran Our Football Teams As We Do Our Classrooms:

Everyone would have the right to equal playing time so that all could develop their athletic skills equally.

Cooperation would be more important than excellence. Competition would be frowned upon.

Since star athletes are already talented, they would not need special coaching or conditioning. They could help teach other athletes since "to teach something is really to learn it."

We could "coach to the middle."

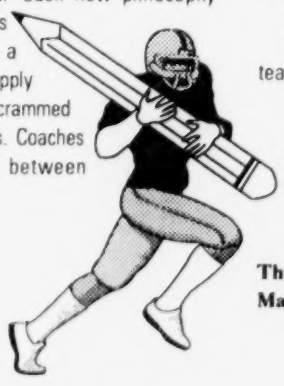
We would strive to develop well-rounded athletes. Thus, the star quarterback would take a turn sitting on the bench as a trainer. The student of lower analytical skills would get a turn as quarterback. The out-of-shape student who hates physical activity would get the opportunity to play running back.

Coaches would be expected to be understanding when jobs, family trips or homework interfered with practice time by adapting game plans to accommodate much multiple interests.

Coaches would be assigned parking lot supervision duty immediately before and after games and during half-time. If athletes had questions about game plans, they could meet with coaches in the parking lot. Coaches would have to plan their plays before or during supervision duty.

Coaches could not demand too much of students lest they create stress or interfere with many other interests and priorities.

If the team had a losing season, new philosophies of coaching would be developed. Each new philosophy would discard all previous philosophies. It would require a two-hour training session and supply the coach with a pocket folder crammed with philosophy and objectives. Coaches could plan their strategies between supervision duties and games.



## We Ran Our Classrooms As We Do Our Football Teams:

Teachers would walk into class enthused and fired up with the importance and relevance of what they were teaching.

Students would be in class because they wanted to learn and they would respect the teacher and put all their energy into the class. Class would be more important to them than their jobs or football practice.

Parents would jam the schools asking the teacher how to help their students excel.

Students wouldn't dare miss class or skip doing homework lest they be dropped from the academic team.

Students would develop a sense of teamwork and cooperation fueled by their love of learning and challenging of each other. Students would take pride in their classes and demand that classmates give their best.

Students would clamor to be "student of the week" or make the honor roll. Other students, teachers and the community would enthusiastically and supportively be involved in student learning.

We would have rallies and bands and cheerleaders for National Merit Scholars and honor students, and they would not feel uncomfortable about receiving the attention because this would be every student's dream.

Every night, the 10 o'clock news would devote a full 10 minute segment to education issues and highlights. The morning radio stations would compete for the education audience.

Newspapers would devote several pages (or a whole section) complete with pictures to academic activities.

We would demand excellence in the classroom and teach cooperation and patience on the playing field.

Our society would clamor to build and equip learning facilities because everybody would recognize the value of well-educated citizens to the business community.

**This is reprinted from the *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, May 14, 1994, Virginia M. MacDonald**

# From the MODESTO POETS' CORNER

**The Mountain**

To some the mountain seems to say
Climb me
As if it were created
As another obstacle in
Man vs. nature

To others the mountain seems to say
Look at me
As if it were created as another one of
Nature's gifts to man

To me the mountain seems to say
See me
As if it were created as a purpose
And only nature knows why

Heather Werth
8th Grade
Roosevelt Junior High School

**Perfectly Round in the Middle**

My eyes
are like the ocean, slowly
it closes onto the sand
My eyes
sparkle like the glimmer of the sun
Peeping over the hilltops in the morning
My eyes
are sometimes sad, but fair
They see the fish swimming in the water
They see the cows grazing in the fields
My eyes,
they are my way of seeing wondrous things
happening
My eyes
close gratefully at night to regain
their strength for the next day,
My eyelashes rest peacefully upon them,
my eyes
My eyes,
the middle of my eyes is like a cherry,
perfectly round in the middle

Erin Overweg
4th Grade
Sonoma Elementary School

**The Librarian**

The librarian
slowly and cautiously
reads from the hard covered
book to her students,
her hand caressing the pages
as if they had not only words,
but life too
She reads on,
her voice picking up emphasis,
then the paragraph slowly disintegrates,
until only the meaning of her existence,
is a title on the book
that no one else will understand,
until they read on
and fully pay attention to not only the words,
but also their meaning

Kim Van Horn
8th grade
La Loma Junior High School

**Sisters**

My blanket,
drawn
up over my face, hugging my cheekbones with
warmth and familiarity
blanks out a day of ordinary dullness,
hollows out my mind and cleanses it with
creativity.

My child mind, foggy with drowsiness,
brightens
and livens with inventiveness
a familiar scenario welcomes me,
and I dissolve into it
becoming a figure in my imagination.

Events borrowed from my real life
act as props
building
a new life
perfect visions of an older and younger me
become characters—become my sisters.

We go shopping,
giggles and excitement tickle my heart
as the love for fashion,
new clothes
and each other
fill a world with everlasting friends and
everlasting role models.

I, an only child
longing to not be only,
discover a power to picture mentally
a dream-life of filled desires,
etched to perfection
with my imagination.

Eve Schaeffer
8th grade
Roosevelt Junior High School

**I Am Not a Poet**

I am Caralee, not any poet
I make thoughts in my head,
that's all
My thoughts are like a lost bird
on a sandy beach
But that is nothing to you
My thoughts have no details
They are nothing big
My thoughts are different because
I am Caralee, not any poet
I make thoughts in my head,
that's all

Caralee McElroy
4th grade
Sonoma Elementary School

**Hybrid**

In a vacant lot
near duplexes multi-generation crowded
the immigrants are growing vegetables
One block from the modern supermarket
they kneel and fill baskets,
wearing straw hats and skirts,
sandaled feet longing to immerse again
in muddy waters of rice fields.
Uprooted and transplanted from villages,
families dig and pull weeds,
maintaining traditions and claiming this land
simply by working the soil—
dirt between toes and fingernails—
nurtured by the earth.

And now at autumn harvest,
election advertisements sprout up along planted boundaries,
cardboard placards rooted in political freedom,
staked beside rows of native corn,
grafting cultures.

Nancy Haskett
8th Grade
La Loma Junior High School

# Educating African-American Gifted Students

by ELINOR RUTH SMITH

A significant portion of my work over the past decade has been dedicated to helping schools discover and nurture gifted abilities in students from minority and poor backgrounds—those grossly underrepresented, on the whole, in programs for the gifted. In doing so, I have, until recently, resisted focusing primarily on issues of race and culture, though as a black American I live with them every day and can speak to them from firsthand experience. My choice has been instead to help parents and educators see that our limited understandings are often the cause of our failure to recognize giftedness even when it is expressed before our very eyes. Let's just open our eyes, I felt, find these children early, and get them into programs to develop their potential.

Though identifying minority and poor students for gifted programs continues to merit considerable attention, I have come to see that our concerns do not begin and cannot end there. Further, while some of the issues pertaining to minority and poor students can be generalized across ethnic groups, many cannot. Outcomes for minority students vary tremendously when looked at by ethnic group. If we follow what happens particularly for African-American students, the focus of this article, it becomes clear that their successful education is not necessarily accomplished simply because we identify and place them in our programs. Too few of them actually thrive or remain in the programs for the duration of their schooling.

What happens to cause these disappointing results? Why do so many of our brightest black students underachieve, despite the benefits of enriched and challenging learning environments? We are tempted to cite societal disadvantage—poverty, lack of enriched early childhood environments, poor schooling, discrimination, segregation, lack of opportunity, bad neighborhoods, poor parenting, and absence of positive role models, among other thing—as the culprit we must overcome. Certainly any one or combination of these disadvantages can create blocks to learning. We expend a great deal of effort attempting to compensate for them. Yet, the success of our efforts is wildly unpredictable. Underachievement among black students is worsening rather than improving. Indeed, we see underachievement even in large numbers of black students who suffer no apparent disadvantage. We need to look elsewhere for answers.

### Barriers to Black Student Achievement

We know that the non-intellective factors accompanying giftedness in children create emotional needs which require particular attention if proper development is to take place. Effective educators of the gifted are aware of this and practice strategies that take these needs into account. We have all seen cases of underachievement or stunted intellectual growth when a gifted student's emotional needs are misunderstood or go unsupported. Just so, there are emotional factors related to ethnicity. Though African Americans are far from being a culturally homogeneous group, all are affected in some way by what it means to be black in America. Recognition and understanding of the effects of racial life in America on school accomplishment and the social/emotional needs these create, I believe, are an important key to eliminating barriers to black student achievement. Furthermore, the interaction of these needs with those which derive from giftedness produce a unique set of circumstances which, if ignored, may sabotage our most well intentioned efforts.

### Stigma and Racial Vulnerability

Perhaps the least visible yet most pernicious barrier to the intellectual development of African-American students is what psychologist Claude Steele calls "stigma" or "racial vulnerability." Images which condition us to our society's view of African Americans as inferior or of low status abound in our daily life. They generate in all of us a kind of racial devaluation which cannot begin to be described by terms such as "prejudice" and "racism." In our schools, as elsewhere, this devaluation takes forms which are often not conscious. It is participated in by those who are well-intentioned, including blacks themselves, as well as by those who have strong prejudices.

An example of this devaluation comes to mind. Over ten years ago, San Diego City Schools, in an effort to increase identification of gifted underrepresented minorities in its programs for

the gifted, noticed that insufficient numbers of such students were being referred for gifted screening by their schools and teachers. The district was able to make headway by instituting a procedure called central nomination. Under this procedure the central office presented lists to each school of its high achievers in the underrepresented groups, those students with achievement test scores at or above a specified level. The schools were required to nominate these students for screening. After testing, significant numbers of these students qualified for gifted programs and the practice has been maintained ever since. The interesting question is why these students' teachers had not recognized their potential or perceived them as gifted. After all, they were doing well in school, at least according to achievement tests. I suspect that racial devaluing was at work both on the part of teachers and of schools.

I was coaching recently with a teacher who goes to great lengths to learn and apply teaching strategies that will raise thinking and performance levels for her "at-risk" students about whom she is quite genuinely concerned. In the course of our debriefing on a particular lesson, I mentioned two children who during discussion were clearly reaching higher levels of thinking than most students in the class. Both were boys; both were underachievers. The surprise she expressed about the African-American boy suggested to me that it seemed to her within the realm of possibility for the other boy to perform at high levels, but that on some less than conscious level she questioned the ability of the black child to do so. For one child it was a question of performance; for the other, of ability. Race aside, we know the effects of presumed inability on a developing mind. This was a well-intentioned teacher who freely displayed a sincere caring for all her students. One wonders what school might have been like for her black pupils had she been like my high school English teacher, D+ Green, who in feigned innocence enjoyed ridiculing me, the only black student in the class, in full presence of my classmates for my use of verbal expressions that were perhaps not proper Bostonian usage but were quite common in my family.

For black students at whatever educational level, pre-school through university, racial vulnerability means fear not only of being devalued for their own mistakes or incompetencies like everyone else, but also of confirming with a mistake or less than acceptable answer the believed inferiority of all blacks. This conditioned racial devaluation which Steele describes means that black students learn early that they are presumed incapable and must themselves prove otherwise. The acceptance or approval they strive to gain by proving themselves must be won again and again, at each new level, with each new teacher, and with each new class. Sometimes efforts to continually prove oneself can lead to outstanding achievement and success. Too often the strain leads to frustration, hopelessness, and vulnerability. Couple this with the conflict gifted students, who themselves are a minority of another kind and status, often experience as a result of their giftedness and you have some idea of the severe needs of black gifted students and the great and conflicting pressures they experience.

### "Disidentification" With School

Some students handle these pressures by choosing not to care about school. Belief in oneself as a capable learner and the self-esteem which derives from such belief are important factors in forming an identification with schooling and educational values. For African-American students, the devalued status of their race devalues them and their work in the classroom. Refusing to accept the values and goals of school as standards against which to measure themselves is a way for many black students of becoming less vulnerable to racial devaluing. They cease to care about or identify with the place that devalues them and find their self-esteem elsewhere—in the peer group, for example. By disidentifying with school, they are able to feel good about themselves even at the same time that they may be doing poorly in school. School achievement becomes irrelevant. This is sometimes misinterpreted as a lack of value for education on the part of African Americans rather than an effort to counteract the racial evaluing they feel so keenly.

As disidentification spreads in a group, a neighborhood or a school, pressures on students who do achieve become fierce. Being truly black becomes identified with not achieving in school. And the true identity of those African-American students who value school and achievement is suspect. They are called names, are ridiculed and are likely to be considered traitors by their peers. Simply being in a gifted program, let alone doing well in one, may present the black student with the dilemma of choosing between racial identity and identity of self as a learner. Even for those students who not experience in an overt way disidentification with school or these painfully strong pressures to do so, there is still the vulnerability of being devalued and the resulting anger sometimes buried below the surface.

### Getting Rid of Stigma and Racial Vulnerability

If devaluing of blacks is so pervasive in our society, how is it possible to free our schools from this terrible stigma? What does it mean to do so? And what does this have to do with programs for the gifted?

Getting rid of stigma and racial vulnerability in our schools means creating schools in which African-American students are valued and are seen as capable. This issue is of great importance to programs for the gifted where our role is to discover and nurture exceptional abilities. Allowing so many black students to underachieve or to drop out of our programs for what appear to be minor difficulties or insignificant reasons helps to perpetuate the devaluing, confirms the implied inferiority and probably encourages disidentification. We must do all we can to eradicate the racial vulnerability these students experience. In programs for the gifted we have the responsibility of seeing that our programs value black

students and see the promise in them.

I am not sure what all the answers are. I do know that there are no precise formulas for how to do what needs to be done. Just as with differentiated opportunities for the gifted, here too we are talking about qualitative issues—issues that have more to do with educators' openness, understanding and willingness to learn. Here are what I think are a few places to start.

**Establish Valuing Relationships**

Teachers and administrators need to establish genuine, valuing relationships with their African American students. No curriculum or set of instructional strategies or interventions for "at-risk" students or programs for developing gifted potential can succeed fully unless students feel valued for themselves and for their potential. No matter what a student presents to us externally, as teachers our role is to see potential and to value and work with that. Teaching and learning are about potential.

If this suggestions sounds like more of the same old platitudes we mouth so frequently in education, it is probably because we have come to assume our schools to be places where students feel valued and appreciated. In fact, as we have discussed at length, this does not exist for many black students. Few of us, like the teacher of the bright black boy I mentioned earlier, recognize when we ourselves are robbing students of the chance to learn in a truly valuing environment.

Part of the problem is that in our society, where the beliefs and culture of the white majority define what is American, those who are part of the majority tend to accept the images they portray as correct ones rather than as products of cultural values. Most immigrants who have come here to take part in the opportunities American life offers are more inclined toward assimilation and acceptance of these values. For American blacks, a non-immigrant population who have been here since the beginning of this nation, assimilation may be more difficult, for it means giving up much of what it means to be black. In school, black students are valued to the degree they master American mainstream culture, a culture that devalues them and refuses to recognize that African-American culture has played a large part in defining American culture and its progress.

School can instead help African-American students master American mainstream culture without giving up black culture. To do this well requires incorporating black life and culture in our core curricula, not just as appendages on special holidays or months. Programs for the gifted could take leadership in such efforts. In addition we need to be aware of the factors that are involved in bicultural socialization. Diane De Anda notes six factors that determine the degree of biculturalism a member of an ethnic minority is likely to achieve. While school can't help with two of them—the degree of overlap or commonality between the two cultures and the degree of similarity or dissimilarity in physical appearance to the norm in the majority culture—it can help with these four:

- Availability of cultural translators (someone who has made the bicultural leap and can explain the majority culture), mediators and models. Teachers can be mediators for black students and can help find translators and models from the students' own ethnic group.
- Amount and type of corrective feedback. Those in a bi-cultural environment need feedback from both cultures so that they can understand how each culture handles a situation. This feedback needs to be positive in nature.
- Mesh of minority individual's conceptual style and problem-solving approach with valued styles of the majority culture. Many African Americans have a relational style, whereas mainstream American culture values an analytical style, particularly in school. We need to make school more relational.
- The individual's degree of bilingualism. Speakers of Black English can learn to master standard English as well.

We speak in gifted education about creating student-centered environments in which student thoughts and ideas are the focus of the learning. Development of students' gifted abilities requires that their interests be taken seriously and that they themselves be appreciated as thinkers, investigators, creators and inquirers. None of this can take place if the students themselves don't feel valued.

**Focus on Student Capabilities and Challenge Them**

When identification of students for gifted programs moves away from looking strictly at achievement and focuses more on assessment of ability, a major concern I hear often expressed by teachers of the gifted when referring to minority students who for a variety of reasons appear to achieve less well than expected is, "Will they be able to keep up?" or "How can I teach them without watering down the program?" Sometimes what teachers mean is, "How can I get these students to function in the analytical style to which I am accustomed and around which my curriculum is organized?"

We might do well to look back at the work of Rosalie Cohen, which identified two styles of learning—analytical and relational—and suggests that children develop their cognitive styles through the socialization they receive in their families. Children from families with structured or formal styles of organization tend to function with analytical cognitive styles. Those from more fluid or what Cohen calls "shared function" families appear more likely to function with relational cognitive styles. A child's ability is not a determinant of cognitive style. It is interesting to note that although neither style is confined to any particular ethnic group, more African Americans tend to use relational style. If we look at African and African-American cultures, we see more elements that are suggestive of relational functioning. American schools, on the other hand, require an analytical approach to cognitive organization.

Asa Hilliard has compiled from Cohen's work lists of characteristics of

both cognitive styles. He shows how analytical our schools are and suggests that black children would fare better if school were more relational. As it stands now, many black children, those with a relational style, are at a disadvantage because school is organized around the cultural preference of the majority for the analytical style, again placing many black children in a devalued position.

Gardner's work on multiple intelligences is helping schools budge a bit in the direction of valuing different preferences for learning. However, I fear that like many other trends in education this is not being taken seriously and may go away. Most teachers are analytical, drawn to teaching perhaps because schooling is a match for their styles and validates them. Schools and teachers need to recognize and value students' capabilities in both cognitive styles. Then, inspiration, challenge and demanding work can go a long way towards helping African-American students achieve and aspire to higher goals. We need especially to be aware of this in programs for the gifted which tend to be increasingly analytical as students move up through the grades.

This is not to suggest that there should be no remediation for students who need it. However, this must be done in the context of helping students see their strong abilities challenged to greater heights. If students feel themselves capable, they are more likely to put forth the effort demanded of them, indeed even to struggle where necessary as long as they don't meet with constant failure.

### Training Our Gift of Deep Vision

Devaluation need not be as highly visible as my humiliation at the hands of D+ Green. It can result from simple, thoughtless omissions. I sat (rather stood) through much of my elementary and secondary schooling refusing to say the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag because once I figured out what it meant, I knew that the "liberty and justice for all" part was not for me—it was not my reality. I knew just as surely that my teachers believed firmly in the reality of those words. Not one of them chose to discuss the difference between reality and the ideals toward which we humans strive. I believe they couldn't see the pledge in that light; nor did they have any idea of how it affected me. And many of them were nice people. I managed to get through occurrences like these and maintain my love of learning thanks to my strong family and their appreciation of me and my abilities, though not without some anger, some self-doubt and a little sadness at the limitations of many of my teachers.

Gifted black students possess the same characteristics we see on general lists of gifted behaviors. The expression of these characteristics, however, may take some unexpected forms. Powers of keen observation, for example, allow them to pick up more quickly on adult attitudes which are racist, are negative towards them or simply ignore them. Though these feelings and sensitivities may never be verbalized, they are at the heart of black students' disaffection for school or our programs. We need to take special heed.

I've recently become fascinated with those 3D pictures that look like two-dimensional colored designs until you stare at them in a way which reveals a whole world not apparent to the ordinary eye. My *Magic Eye* book of 3D illusions advertises itself as a "new way of looking at the world." The advertising on the jacket exhorts us to "discover and train your *gift of deep vision!* All you need to 'see' the 3D illusion on the front cover are your two eyes and some patience." Working successfully with African-American gifted students requires just that—a new way of looking at the world—two eyes and some patience. There is a world out there that these students experience and that we don't see. As teachers, we do have a gift of deep vision. Sometimes we are too impatient or lazy to use it. We must do something about the achievement of black students in our gifted programs. The degree to which we can successfully educate gifted students from varying backgrounds is the degree to which we can expect schools and communities to see our programs as viable and necessary.

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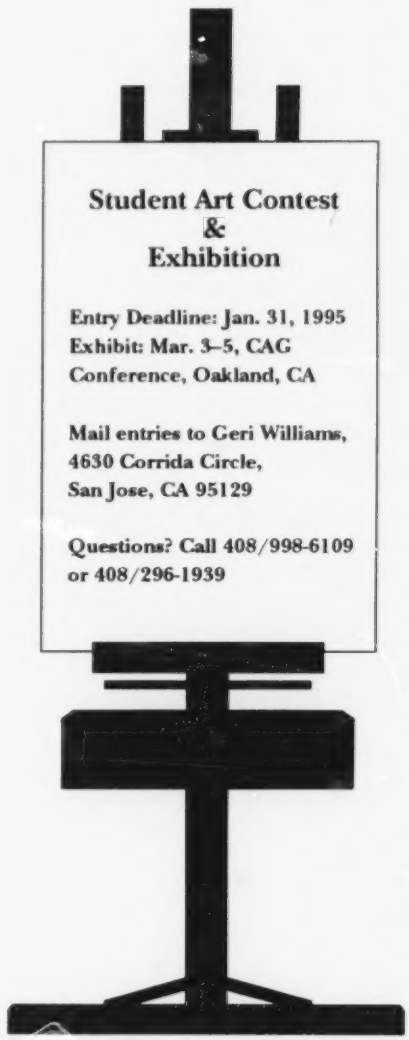
*A list of the references for this article may be obtained by writing to the* Communicator *editor.*



# Understanding Intensity in Gifted Children

By SHARON LIND

As I continue to work with gifted and talented children and adults, and the parents, educators, and counselors who work and live with them on a daily basis, I am struck by an overwhelming concern about intensity in this population. Questions and statements like "He always overreacts." or "Does she have to analyze everything?" or "He has an incredible imagination, but..." pervade conversations. Adults feel genuine concern about the degree to which intense children experience their lives. Those who live with this intensity feel ambivalent about its impact on the child. Linda Silverman (1990) tells us that

> *The intricate thought processes that mark these individuals as gifted are mirrored in the intricacy of their emotional development. Idealism, self-doubt, perceptiveness, excruciating sensitivity, moral imperatives, desperate needs for understanding, acceptance, love—all impinge simultaneously. Their vast emotional range make them appear contradictory: mature and immature, arrogant and compassionate, aggressive and timid. Semblances of composure and self-assurance often mask deep feelings of insecurity. The inner experience of the gifted young person is rich, complex and turbulent.(p. 16)*

It is this turbulent, complex and rich inner experience that can be a blessing or a burden to the intense, gifted person. As influential adults, we can help children to learn to deal with and take advantage of their intensities and help turn the dissonance into more of a symphony.

### Kazimierz Dabrowski

The work of Kazimierz Dabrowski (1902-1980) provides an excellent framework in which to understand intensity in the gifted. Dabrowski, a Polish psychiatrist and psychologist, developed the Theory of Positive Disintegration as a response to the prevalent psychological theories of his time. He believed that conflict and inner suffering were necessary for advanced development—for movement towards self-actualization (as Maslow called it), and towards a hierarchy of values based on altruism—for movement from "what is" to "what ought to be." Dabrowski also described the "multilevelness" of development. Love to one person is not the same as love to another: love to a 4-year-old is not the same as love to a 40-year-old, love to a gifted 12-year-old is not the same as love to a non-gifted peer. Dabrowski also observed that not all people move towards an advanced level of development, but that innate ability/intelligence combined with "overexcitabilities" were predictive of potential for higher level development. It is those overexcitabilities that we will use as a vehicle to better understand intensity in the gifted.

### Overexcitabilities

Overexcitabilities (OEs) are inborn intensities indicating heightened ability to respond to stimuli. Found to a greater degree in the creative and gifted, overexcitabilities are expressed in increased sensitivity, awareness, and intensity, and represent a real difference in the fabric of life and quality of experience. Dabrowski identified five areas of intensity—Psychomotor, Sensual, Intellectual, Imaginational, and Emotional. A person may possess one or more of these. Michael Piechowski (1979) tells us

> *If more than one of these channels, or all five, have wide apertures, then the abundance and diversity of feeling, thought, imagery, and sensation will inevitably lead to dissonance, conflict and tension, but at the same time it enriches, expands, and intensifies the individual's mental development (p. 29).*

### Psychomotor Overexcitability

Psychomotor OE is a heightened excitability of the neuromuscular system. This Psychomotor intensity includes a "capacity for being active and energetic" (Piechowski, 1991, p. 287), love of movement for its own sake, surplus of energy demonstrated by rapid speech, zealous enthusiasm, intense physical activity, and a need for action (Piechowski, 1979, 1991). When feeling tense, individuals strong in Psychomotor OE may talk compulsively, act impulsively, misbehave and act out, display nervous habits, show intense drive (tending towards "workaholism"), compulsively organize, or become quite competitive. They derive great joy from their boundless physical and verbal enthusiasm and activity; but others may find

them overwhelming. At home and at school, these children seem never to be still. They thrive on activity and encourage others to "just do something." They may talk constantly. Adults and peers want to tell them to sit down and be quiet! This Psychomotor OE child has the potential of being misdiagnosed as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). See the article "Something to Consider Before Referring a Gifted Child for ADD/ADHD Evaluation" on page 24.

**Sensual Overexcitability**

Sensual OE is expressed as a heightened experience of sensual pleasure or displeasure including seeing, smelling, touching, tasting, and hearing (Piechowski, 1979, 1991). Those with Sensual OE have a far more expansive experience from their sensual input. They have an increased and early appreciation of aesthetic pleasures (music, language, art, etc.) and derive endless delight from tastes, smells, textures, sounds, and sights. But because of this increased sensitivity, they may also feel overstimulated or uncomfortable with sensory input. Gifted children sometimes have difficulty with sorting out all they hear, feel, smell, etc. Their sensitivity makes them easily distractible. When tense, some individuals high in Sensual OE may overeat, go on buying sprees, or seek the limelight (Piechowski, 1979, 1991). Others may withdraw from stimulation. Sensually overexcitable children may find clothing tags, or classroom noise, or smells from the cafeteria so distracting that schoolwork becomes secondary. These children may also become so absorbed in their love of a particular piece of art or music that the outside world ceases to exist.

**Intellectual Overexcitability**

Intellectual OE is demonstrated by a marked need to seek understanding and truth, to gain knowledge, and to analyze and synthesize. Those high in Intellectual OE have incredibly active minds. They are intensely curious, avid readers, and keen observers. They are able to concentrate, engage in prolonged intellectual effort, and be tenacious in problem solving when they choose. They relish elaborate planning and have a remarkably detailed visual recall. These people love theory, thinking about thinking, and moral thinking. They are also quite independent of thought and sometimes appear critical of and impatient with others who cannot sustain their intellectual pace. This intellectual intensity seems to cause the greatest difficulty at school and home when children become excited about learning and thinking that they interrupt or blurt out answers at inappropriate times or are too honest about or critical of others' ideas.

**Imaginational Overexcitability**

Imaginational OE reflects a heightened play of the imagination with rich association of images and impressions, frequent use of image and metaphor, facility for invention and fantasy, detailed visualization, and elaborate dreams (Piechowski, 1979, 1991). Often children high in Imaginational OE mix truth with fiction, create their own private worlds with imaginary companions, and dramatize to escape boredom. They find it difficult to stay tuned into a classroom where creativity and imagination are secondary to learning rigid academic curriculum. They may write stories or draw instead of doing seat work or participating in class discussions, or they may have difficulty completing tasks when some incredible idea sends them off on an imaginative tangent.

**Emotional Overexcitability**

Emotional OEs are often the first to be noticed by parents. It is reflected in heightened, intense feelings, extremes of complex emotions, identification with others' feelings, and strong affective expression (Piechowski, 1991). Sometimes the negative manifestations include physical responses like stomach aches and blushing, or concern with death and depression (Piechowski, 1979). Emotionally overexcitable people have a remarkable capacity for deep relationships; they show strong emotional attachments to people, places, and things. They have compassion, empathy, and sensitivity in relationships. This sensitivity may make it difficult to adjust to new environments or lead to conflict about the depth, or lack of depth, in a relationship. Those with strong Emotional OE are acutely aware of their own feelings, of how they are growing and changing, and often carry on inner dialogs and practice self-judgment (Piechowski, 1979, 1991). Children high in Emotional OE are often accused of "overreacting" or being concerned about "adult" issues like the homeless, AIDS, or war. Their compassion and concern for others, as well as the intensity of their feelings may interfere with tasks which are unrelated to real-world issues.

**General Strategies for Working with Intense Children**

Having grasped this framework for understanding intensities, one needs to find strategies for helping children (and adults) deal with and take advantage of these overexcitabilites. Resources for strategies may be gathered from varied sources: counseling, learning style, special education classroom management literature; parenting books, even popular business texts. Some general strategies, applicable regardless of which intensities are present, include:

**Accept the child as is**

Think of intensities as inborn traits, like left-handedness or introversion, and communicate that you love/like the person for who s/he is.

**Use and teach clear verbal and nonverbal communication skills**

Intense people need to be listened to and need to know how to share their intensity and feelings of differentness.

**Teach stress management, from 'toddlerhood' on**

Being more sensitive to stimuli makes the intense person in even greater need of stress management skills.

**Help the child create spaces/things which provide comfort**

As a way of fending off unwanted and overwhelming stimuli/feelings,

intense people need to know how to make their environment more comfortable and may choose to carry some comforting (preferably small and unobtrusive) item with them.

**Allow time to pursue passions**

Allowing children to pursue their passions shows respect for their abilities and intensities and provides time for them to 'wallow' in what they love, to be validated for who they are. *Never* remove passions as consequences for inappropriate behavior or use them as rewards.

**Help the child become aware of his/her own behaviors**

Often intense people are insensitive and unaware of how their behaviors affect others. They assume that everyone will just understand why they interrupt to share an important idea, or tune out when creating a short story in their head during dinner.

Help the child understand which behaviors may be unacceptable/distracting and where.

Teach the child to be responsible for his/her behavior.

### Specific Strategies for Working with Intense Children

The ideas listed above should be applied regardless of the intensity. Below is a cursory list of some specific strategies appropriate to each of the five types of intensity.

**Psychomotor**

- Allow time for physical or verbal activity, before, during, and after normal daily and school activities
- Help the child find physical or verbal activities which are acceptable to child/adult/companions
- Provide time for spontaneity and open ended, free-wheeling activities

**Sensual**

- Create an environment which limits offensive stimuli
- Provide opportunities for limelight
- Provide time to dwell in their delight of the sensual

**Intellectual**

- Help the child find answers to his/her questions
- Help the child find ways to act on his/her concerns and to feel effective
- Help the child understand how his/her criticism is taken
- Remember not to treat children like small adults

**Imaginational**

- Help the child to differentiate between his/her imagination and the real world
- Help the child to use imagination to function in the real world

**Emotional**

- Accept all their feelings in all their intensity
- Teach the child to anticipate physical and emotional responses and prepare for them
- Consider attachments when requiring change

It is often quite difficult and demanding to work and live with intense individuals. Those who are not so intense find the behaviors unexplainable, frequently incomprehensible, and often bizarre. Those who are intense may have more compassion and understanding, but may feel conflicts when their intensities are not to the same degree, or when all the intense people are intense simultaneously! The key issue is acceptance of ourselves and of our intense children and friends. I find encouragement in Dabrowski's theory which tells us that gifted/creative/overexcitable people have the potential to lead us from "what is" to "what ought to be."

### Suggested Reading List


Faber, A. and Mazlish, E. (1980). *How to talk so kids will listen and listen so kids will talk.* New York: Avon.

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*A list of the references for this article may be obtained by writing to the* Communicator *editor.*


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# Something to Consider Before Referring A Gifted Child for ADD/ADHD Evaluation

by SHARON LIND

Parents and gifted educators are asked with increased frequency to instruct gifted children to conform to a set of societal standards of acceptable behavior and achievement—to smooth the edges of the square peg in order to fit into a "normal" hole. Spontaneity, inquisitiveness, imagination, boundless enthusiasm, and emotionality are being discouraged to create calmer, quieter, more controlled environments in school. An extension of this trend is reflected in an increase in referrals for medical evaluation of gifted children as ADD/ADHD (Attention Deficit Disorder/Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder). There is no doubt that gifted children can be ADD/ADHD. However, there are also gifted children whose "inappropriate behavior" may be a result of being highly gifted and/or intense.

This intensity coupled with classroom environments and curriculum which do not meet needs of gifted, divergent, creative, or random learners, may lead to the mislabeling of many children as ADHD. To avoid mislabeling gifted children, parents and educators need to ask themselves the following questions *before referring a child* for medical or psychological evaluation.

- Could the behaviors be in response to inappropriate placement, insufficient challenge, or lack of intellectual peers?
- Have any curricular modifications been made in an attempt to change the inappropriate behaviors?
- Has the child been interviewed? What are his or her feelings about the behaviors?
- Does the child feel out of control?
- Has the child been taught strategies to: limit stimuli, learn appropriate social skills, deal with stress?
- Can the child explain in a reasonable fashion why tasks, activities remain unfinished?
- Do lack of interest, boredom, irrelevancy play a part?
- What prompts interruptions or excessive talking?
- Can the "inattentive" child repeat the instructions?
- Does the child thrive on working on multiple tasks?
- Do the behaviors only occur at certain times of day, during certain subjects, with certain teachers, in certain environments?
- Is the child getting an appropriate amount of teacher attention?
- Is the child just demonstrating his or her personality style, type of giftedness, or intensities?

If, after addressing these questions, parents and teachers believe that it is **not** an unsuitable, inflexible, or unreceptive educational environment which is causing the child to "misbehave" or "tune out," or if the child feels out of control, then it is most certainly appropriate to refer a gifted child for ADD/ADHD diagnosis. Premature referral bypasses the educational system and takes control away from students, parents and educators. By referring before trying to adjust the educational environment and curriculum, educators appear to be denouncing the positive attributes of giftedness and/or blaming the victim of an inappropriate educational system.

When deciding to refer, parents should search for a competent diagnostician who has experience with both giftedness and attention deficit disorders. It is never appropriate for teachers, parents or pediatricians to label a child as ADD or ADHD without comprehensive clinical evaluation that can distinguish ADD/ADHD from look-alikes with other causes.

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# Helping Gifted Students With Stress Management

by LESLIE S. KAPLAN

**What is stress?**

Stress is the body's general response to any intense physical, emotional or mental demand placed on it by oneself or others. While racing to meet a deadline, dealing with a difficult person or earning a poor grade are all stressful, so are the excitement of playing a lively game of tennis, falling in love and being selected to join a special program for gifted students.

**How can a youngster experience stress when nothing bad is happening?**

Anything can be a stressor if it lasts long enough, happens often enough, is strong enough or is perceived as stress. Working diligently on a project, performing many simple but boring tasks or earning an "A" grade when one expected an "A+" may all be stressful.

**Is a gifted student more likely to feel stress than others?**

Many gifted youngsters have a heightened sensitivity to their surroundings, to events, to ideas and to expectations. Some experience their own high expectations for achievement as a relentless pressure to excel. Constant striving to live up to self-expectations—or those of others—to be first, best or both can be very stressful. With every new course, new teacher or new school questions arise about achievement and performance, since every new situation carries with it the frightening risk of being mediocre. Striving becomes even more stressful when unrealistic or unclear expectations are imposed by adults or peers. The pressure to excel, accompanied by other concerns such as feeling different, self-doubt (the "imposter" syndrome), and the need to prove their giftedness can drain the energy of gifted students and result in additional stress.

Stress occurs even when everything is going well. Youngsters get tired from their constant efforts and may secretly fear that next time they will not be as successful.

**What are some other stresses on a gifted student?**

Many gifted students accept responsibility for a variety of activities such as a demanding courseload; leadership in school activities, clubs or sports; and part-time jobs. Even if it were humanly possible, doing everything well would be physically and emotionally stressful.

Vacations may be stressful if students are comfortable only when achieving and succeeding. Taking time off may make them feel nervous and lacking control.

Gifted students need intellectual challenge. Boring, monotonous busy-work is very stressful for individuals who prefer thinking and reasoning activities. Boredom may result in anger, resentment, or in some cases, setting personal goals for achievement and success that significantly exceed those of parents or school.

Some gifted students value independence and leadership, yet the separation they feel from their peers results in loneliness and fewer opportunities to relieve stress. Finding a peer group can be difficult, particularly for adolescents. Some experience a conflict between belonging to a group and using their extraordinary abilities.

Gifted students are complex thinkers, persuasively able to argue both sides of any question. This ability, however, may complicate decisions. Students may lack information about and experience with resources, processes, outcomes or priorities that help tip an argument toward a clear solution. Furthermore, not every problem has one obviously correct answer. Compromise and accommodation are realities in the adult world, but they are not easily perceived from a young person's viewpoint. Thus, decision making may be a very stressful process.

**How can stress hurt a gifted student's self-esteem?**

During the early years, school may be easy, with minimum effort required for success. If students are not challenged, they conclude that "giftedness" means instant learning, comprehension and mastery, and that outstanding achievement follows naturally. As years pass, however, schoolwork becomes more difficult. Some students discover that they must work harder to earn top grades and that they have not developed productive study habits. Many suspect they are no longer gifted, and their sense of self-worth is undermined.

Stress can hamper the very abilities that make these students gifted. Stress clouds thinking, reduces concentration, and impairs decision

making. It leads to forgetfulness and a loss of ability to focus keenly on a task, and it makes students overly sensitive to criticism. Under these conditions, they perform less well and are more upset by their failures.

**Gifted students have so much potential. How can that be stressful?**

Abundant gifts and the potential for success in many different subjects and careers may increase opportunities and lead to complex choices. Limiting options is a confusing and upsetting process because it means saying "no" to some attractive alternatives. A person cannot prepare to become an architect *and* a financial planner, or an advertising executive *and* a scientist. At some point, the education needed for one career splits from that needed for the other. To set career goals, students must know themselves well as individuals. They must understand their own personalities, values and goals and use self-awareness as a guide for making decisions. These activities are all stressful.

**How can I tell whether or not a gifted student is experiencing burnout?**

Not all gifted youngsters are stressed by the same events. Individual responses to stress also differ: younger students do not tend to respond to stress in the same way that teenagers do. Since each student is unique, parents and teachers will have to watch carefully to know whether a child is stressed to the point of constructive excitement or to the point of damaging overload.

The following checklist includes many, but not all, symptoms of burnout:

- Student is no longer happy or pleasantly excited about school activities, but rather is negative or cynical toward work, teachers, classmates, parents and the whole school-and achievement-centered experience.
- Student approaches most school assignments with resignation or resentment.
- Student exhibits boredom.
- Student suffers from sleeplessness, problems in falling asleep or periodic waking.
- Student overreacts to normal con-

## How Can Gifted Students Cope with Stress?

Some ways of coping with stress are healthy; others are not. Some healthy ways of handling stress include the following.

**Change the source of the stress.**
Do something else for a while. Put down those study notes and jog for an hour.

**Confront the source of the stress.**
If it is a person, persuade him or her to remove the stress. Ask the teacher for an extension on a project. Sit down with the person driving you crazy and talk about ways you might better work together.

**Talk about the source of stress.**
Rid yourself of frustration. Find a good listener and complain. Talk through possible solutions.

**Shift your perspective.**
Tell yourself that each new situation or problem is a new challenge, and that there is something to be learned from every experience. Try to see the humorous side of the situation.

**Learn skills and attitudes that make tasks easier and more successful.**
Practice effective organization and time management skills. For example, large projects are easier and less overwhelming when broken down into manageable steps. Learn to type and revise assignments on a word processor. Learn about yourself and your priorities, and use the information to make decisions. Learn how to say "no" gracefully when someone offers you another attractive (or unpleasant) task about which you have a choice. Tell yourself that this unpleasantness will be over soon and that the whole process will bring you closer to reaching your goal. Mark the days that are left on the calendar and enjoy crossing out each one as you near the finish.

**Take time out for enjoyable activities.**
Everyone needs a support system. Find friends, teachers or relatives with whom you have fun. Spend time with these people when you can be yourself and set aside the pressures of school, work or difficult relationships. As a reward for your efforts, give yourself work breaks. Listen to your favorite music, shoot baskets or participate in some other brief activity that is mentally restful or fun.

**Ignore the source of the stress.**
Practice a little healthy procrastination and put a pleasant activity ahead of the stressful one. This is, of course, only a short-term solution.

**Get regular physical exercise and practice sound nutrition.**
Physical activity not only provides time out, but also changes your body chemistry as you burn off muscle tension built up from accommodating stress. Exercise also increases resistance to illness. Nutritious food and regular meals help regulate your body chemistry and keep you functioning at your sharpest. Eating healthy and attractively prepared food can be an enjoyable activity on its own.



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## Ways Not to Cope With Stress

The following are some *unhealthy* ways students cope with stress:

**Escaping through alcohol, drugs, frequent illness, sleep, overeating or starving themselves.**
These strategies suggest a permanent withdrawal or avoidance rather than a time out.

**Selecting strategies to avoid failure.**
Gifted students closely link their identities to excellence and achievement. Failure, or even the perception of failure, seriously threatens their self-esteem. By not trying, or by selecting impossible goals, students can escape having their giftedness questioned. Only their lack of effort will be questioned.

**Aiming too low.**
This reduces stress by eliminating intense pressure or possible feelings of failure. Dogged procrastination in starting projects, selecting less competitive colleges or less rigorous courses, or dropping out of school rather than bringing home poor grades allows students to avoid feelings of failure in the short run. Sadly, this sets the stage for long-term disappointment caused by a destructive coping style.

**Overscheduling daily life with schoolwork and extracurricular activities, selecting impossibly demanding courseloads, or fussing endlessly over assignments in vain attempts to make them perfect.**
With this strategy, it is possible to succeed only through superhuman effort; thus the student can save face by setting goals too high for anyone to achieve.

cerns or events.
- Student experiences fatigue, extreme tiredness, low energy level.
- Student exhibits unhappiness with self and accomplishments.
- Student has nervous habits such as eye blinking, head shaking or stuttering.
- Student has physical ailments such as weekly or daily stomachaches or headaches.
- Student is frequently ill.
- Student exhibits dependence through increased clinging or needing and demanding constant support and reassurance.
- Student engages in attention-getting behaviors such as aggressive or acting-out behaviors.
- Student has a sense of being trapped or a feeling of being out of control.
- Student is unable to make decisions.
- Student has lost perspective and sense of humor.
- Student experiences increased feelings of physical, emotional and mental exhaustion in work and activities that used to give pleasure.

**How can parents, teachers and counselors reduce stress on gifted students?**

*Help each gifted student understand and cope with his or her intellectual, social and emotional needs during each stage of development.* In some ways, the needs of gifted students mirror those of more typical children. Giftedness, however, adds a special dimension to self-understanding and self-acceptance. If gifted youngsters are to develop into self-fulfilled adults, the following differential needs must be addressed: (a) the need to understand the ways in which they are different from others and the ways in which they are the same; (b) the need to accept their abilities, talents and limitations; (c) the need to develop social skills; (d) the need to feel understood and accepted by others; and (e) the need to develop an understanding of the distinction between "pursuit of excellence" and "pursuit of perfection." Van Tassel-Baska (1989) and Delisle (1988) have offered useful suggestions on how to meet these needs.

*Help each gifted student develop a realistic and accurate self-concept.* Giftedness does not mean instant mastery or winning awards. Parents and teachers need to set realistic expectations for efforts and achievements and help the student choose appropriate goals. It is important to recognize and appreciate efforts and improvement.

On the other hand, giftedness permits people to learn and use information in unusual ways. Given parental support and encouragement, personal motivation and opportunities to learn and apply their knowledge, gifted students may enjoy the process of creating new ideas, especially if they believe that it is all right to think differently than age-mates.

*Help each gifted student to be a whole person.*

Gifted youngsters are children first and gifted second. While their learning styles may be special, they are individuals with emotions, likes and dislikes, and unique personalities. They will not wake up one day and be "not gifted." They should not feel responsible for solving world problems, nor does the world owe them tribute. It is up to each student to make life meaningful. Understanding these realistic limits to the bounty of giftedness can reduce stress on confused students.

Gifted students have strong emotions that give personal meaning to each experience. Emotions should be recognized, understood and used as a valid basis for appropriate behaviors.

*Show patience.* Let students select and strive toward their own goals. Do not compare them or their achievements to others.

Some gifted students are intensely curious and may have less tolerance for ambiguity and unpredictability than their age-mates. Help them develop patience with themselves.

*Show acceptance and encouragement.* Encourage students to work purposefully, thoughtfully, and thoroughly and do the best they can. It is not necessary to excel in every situation. Help them develop priorities to decide which tasks require the best efforts and which require simply "good enough."

Accept and reward efforts and the process of working on tasks. Sincere effort is valuable in itself and deserves reinforcement. The means may be more deserving of merit than the ends. Efforts are within the gifted students' control; the outcomes (high grades, prizes, honors, etc.) are not. Show love and acceptance, regardless of the outcome. These youngsters need to be cherished as individuals, not simply for their accomplishments. They must know that they can go home and be loved—and continue to love themselves—even when they do not finish first or best.

*Encourage flexibility and appropriate behavior.* Curiosity is frequently mentioned as a characteristic of gifted learners. Many individuals agree that gifted students seem to question rules automatically, asking "How come?" Concerned adults can reduce stress on gifted students by helping them distinguish between hard-and-fast rules that should be followed and those that can safely be questioned or altered and helping them understand why rules sometimes change from time to time.

Many people recognize that new ideas come from reshaping and discarding old notions of right and wrong and want students to be inquiring, creative and resourceful thinkers. But society, schools, teachers and academic subjects have rules. In our society, flagrant rule breakers may be penalized and shut out of opportunities for further growth and enrichment. Our students will become better thinkers by learning that rules are man-made guides to behavior, not perfect or divine, but they are to be learned, understood and followed appropriately in certain situations. For instance, not every student will like every teacher, but showing respect is appropriate behavior even if the student privately thinks otherwise. Wise adults can model problem-solving methods that result in workable solutions and help gifted students learn when and how to use their novel perceptions, creativity and independent thoughts appropriately and effectively.

Understanding and following rules does not mean conforming to every situation. There are some occasions when gifted students should not be expected to accommodate others. For example, a severe mismatch between a youngster's ability level and a school program may be very stressful. Altering the student's curriculum may solve the problem.

Some parents unintentionally send mixed messages regarding behavior. When children are rude or uncooperative and offend teachers, other adults or peers, their parents behave as though giftedness somehow excuses such behavior and the offending actions highlight their child's specialness. Some even seem pleased. These parents do their children a great disservice by denying them the opportunity to learn empathy, teamwork and tolerance for individual differences.

*Let students live their own lives.* Caring adults support, encourage and celebrate students' efforts and successes, but they stand back a bit from these efforts and achievements. They let students select and master activities for personal enjoyment. Unfortunately, some students wonder whether their efforts and gains are for personal satisfaction or to please overly involved parents, teachers and others. When these students wish to give up an activity that no longer brings pleasure or interest, they fear they will disappoint others, and their are likely to feel trapped.

*Be available for guidance and advice.* Some gifted students appear to be more mature than their chronological age indicates. They have advanced verbal skills and can talk a good line. Nevertheless, they are still children and need realistic, clearly stated guidelines about limits, values and proper behavior. These young people may not have enough information or experience to make wise and effective decisions. They may not understand decision-making processes, and they need wise adults to listen and guide as they talk through the problem, the alternatives and the pro's and con's, and try out choices. Knowing that they can be independent and still talk through their thoughts with others without losing face reduces stress for these students.

Gifted students need to hear adults openly state some of their perspectives to understand expectations and acceptable limits. While these students are very perceptive, they cannot read minds.

Gifted students may know more facts about their interest area than do their parents and other adults. However, they have not lived longer; they need loving concern and guidance.

**This is an ERIC Digest prepared by Leslie S. Kaplan, Director of Guidance, York County Public Schools, Virginia.**

*A list of references and resources for this article may be had by contacting the* Communicator *editor.*

*Continued from page 1*

**CASE STUDY 2 (cont.)**

as a high school senior, receiving 10 college credits of mathematics and 6 English credits when she attended the University. At college, she took placement exams in foreign language and music theory, picking up another 23 credits for college work.

**Outcome:** Graduated from a prestigious university Summa Cum Laude and Phi Beta Kappa, and completed a double master's degree from a selective Ivy League school at last report.

**CASE STUDY 3**

**School years 1989-1992**

A large midwestern urban school district decided to develop a "school of the future," a school that would ultimately individualize the education of its extremely diverse population of schoolchildren. The curriculum was developed from scratch by four "master teachers," paid very well for the additional case loads, design responsibilities and administrative roles they would take on in this model. Textbooks were avoided; only real-life, relevant materials would be used in instruction. Children learned through two primary modes: (1) small group enrichment units, self-selected by the students according to their interests, and (2) completion of skills work according to a Personal Learning Plan, managed by computer and delivered instructionally by computer. The master teachers in this school worked very hard with their low achieving, "at risk," and special education students in remediating for gaps or deficiencies in their learning and curriculum. None of the teachers had training in gifted education, but felt these students would be kept busy as part of cooperative groups for the enrichment units and by being able to self-select their own enrichment. The school bought heavily into the philosophy that the only real differences in children are differences in the time it takes to master content. There was a strong belief that "all children can learn from the same materials" and ultimately through careful avoidance of ability grouping and encouragement of cooperative learning, all children would develop the potential to learn the same amount of material in the same amount of time. Such ideas were first espoused by Benjamin Bloom and Thomas Guskey in the 1970's and had hit "big time" in this district as Outcomes-based education in the 1990's.

**Outcomes:** Testing administered at the beginning and end of each school year showed slight declines in achievement progress annually in most areas of curriculum, except for progress maintenance in science and social studies, a large decline in mathematics computation, concepts, problem solving and comprehension was experienced through the second year, despite some highly creative math enrichments in Logo, Tesselations and Tangrams. Standard deviations on all test score means were cut in half across the three years. The low quartile made slight overall gains in their scores. The middle quartile of ability made slight declines, and the upper quartile made significant declines in their mean scores for this period of time.

In looking at the present, then, we can foresee a couple of possibilities for the future of gifted education and what it might look like for gifted learners. We could be presenting gifted children with a menu of possible services and subsequently selecting from them as many as necessary to meet specific needs, OR we could be creating a Vonnegut-like world in which everyone is forced to be average. Ballet dancers wear weights on their ankles and arms so they can move more awkwardly and slowly; the bright learners receive an electronic beep through their brains at three-second intervals to interrupt any brilliant thoughts or ideas they might be having, and so forth. Both futures can be derived from case studies of our past.

In thinking in more general national terms, it seemed to me we needed three different kinds of visions for the future. Hence, I developed three different scenarios of what the future of gifted education might look like. As you study each of the scenarios think about the positive and negative implication of each and decide for yourself which is the *most satisfactory* one for the greatest number of individuals and which is the *most likely* to occur in the future.

**Senario One: The Best Case**

*The U.S. develops a national plan of action to fund education as its first priority. Defense has gone by the wayside. Curriculum reform projects are funded with huge grants specifically designated to boost the performance of gifted learners after several years of test score regression to the mean. People such as Jerome Bruner, the truly great educational theoretician of our times, creates several new curricula which rival his earlier efforts of the 1960's—MACOS, PSSC Physics, BSCS Biology. The new curriculum has punch; it has challenge and it has all the advanced, accelerated, enriched, interdisciplinary and procedural knowledge that gifted children need so that they have "meat" to do their higher order thinking around. Furthermore, there is money and more money to provide specialized training for a carefully selected corps of teachers of the gifted: teachers who are very bright, who wouldn't think of standing up in front of a class of students and reading from a curriculum guide, who expect to develop their own instruction for gifted learners, who are excited and thrilled to have such students—teachers who spend much time on their own pursuing their own intellectual interests, activities like reading the Great Books or learning a new language, rather than tatting lace or water skiing. These teachers have been guaranteed that from this point on, gifted education will be a consistent part of regular education. Their programs will never again be threatened in April, rallied for in front of school boards in June, and resurrected at the last moment in August before school starts up again. And funding is provided to totally transform schools, making liberal use of the grouping management strategies that the research supports for the maximum cognitive gains for gifted children: homogeneous grouping for advanced instruction, cluster grouping, enrichment pull-outs, individualized accelerative options and sparing use of mixed-ability cooperative grouping.*

Of course, in this scenario, similar funding levels have provided for curriculum reform projects and the special training of a corps of teachers devoted to regular and special education children. These developments have taken place because we have discovered once and for all that all learners do not learn the same amount or the same things in the same amount of time, and we have come to value these differences, not to see advanced learners as "high status" and low ability learners as "low status," or vice versa. The outcomes for all learners place an emphasis on the arts, on aesthetics, on literature and on the world's great thoughts, in part as a reaction to oversaturation of television and movie violence, inane television sitcoms and monosyllabic news anchors with carefully sprayed hair-dos.

**Scenario Two: The Middle-of-the-Road Case**

*A national report is issued outlining the need for intelligent, well-trained leaders for our nation. Government, for example, has hit a new low with its highest leaders*

*unable to spell potato correctly or know that Mexico is not in South America or that Latin is not spoken in Latin America. This report rallies government agencies and congress to provide money for the development of curriculum and teacher training programs for students with gifts and talents. To become first in the world in math and science, the government realizes that its brightest students will get us there. To solve the increasingly complex problems of our environment, world politics, the U.S. budget deficit and the general decline in ethical values, there is a realization that it will be our brightest children who will solve these problems and get us back on track. To help the increasingly elderly population and provide for the increasing numbers of children born with disabilities and dependencies of one form or another, the nation realizes they want the bright ones to assume these roles.*

*So brilliant curriculum is developed for this group—identified as the top 15% nationally. The recommendations of the National Council for Teachers of Mathematics are purely and appropriately implemented. The National Science Foundation funds huge projects for differentiated science teaching and curriculum for GT learners. The basic "skills" of the total curriculum reform effort come to include values and ethics, social responsibility and community service, environmental sciences, economics and government policy, all in preparation for solving society's ills. The remainder of the population continues to be taught using the school reform methods developed in the 1990's: outcomes based education, cooperative learning, elements of effective instruction, heterogeneous classrooms, a curricular focus on caring and sharing, a mastery approach to basic skills and total integration of students with disabilities in the regular classroom.*

**Scenario Three: The Worst Case**

*The school reform movement has hit the nation in a big 'and resounding way. Gifted and special education programs have been eliminated and primary responsibility for the learning of all children is placed on our current corps of teachers and their unions. In order to manage the increased diversity of their classrooms, teachers focus on teaching to the middle or lower ability students in their classrooms. There is an emphasis on bringing UP the performance of our cultural minority groups, the economically disadvantaged, the "at risk" populations. There is literally no time for classroom teachers to provide challenge or meet the educational needs of gifted learners. In many cases, the gifted students are utilized to help their classmates who struggle.*

*When national norms on standardized achievement tests across the nation's schools begin to plummet, the national educational agenda responds by pushing for national tests to be newly developed to replace these older achievement measures. Business, human resource development and military testing personnel are called in as consultants in the development of this national assessment.*

*A set of standard competencies are also developed for teachers. They are required to demonstrate their mastery of basic skills in order to obtain a "national certificate of mastery," and later can develop portfolios of testimony about how they have touched children's lives as they work toward a "master teacher" national certification.*

*School organization changes. Schools work in "families" or "clusters." One enters them to see children cooperating well as they work on shared tasks. They are happy at school and teachers are happy too. Other than push for a national student assessment and national set of standards for teacher certification, the government has removed itself from educational policy-making. Decision-making authority has moved to individual school sites, who vie to see which building can produce at the highest levels with the same level of meagre resources. Site-based teams decide what schools will teach and how school dollars will be spent.*

Now comes he time when you must decide which scenario is most likely to be painted in the future, and which is most generally satisfactory. Personally, I believe the second scenario will ultimately prevail. It isn't the best. It does not provide new and better ways for educating 85% of our school population, but it will put our brightest kids in a position to solve our societal problems and to take care of those having difficulties coping with society as it is. In the long run, it probably would make our country stronger, but it is far from ideal.

What can we do to ensure the best for whichever scenario actually does occur or for some fourth scenario not even described as of yet? How can we paint our brightest vision of the future?

1. Support good grouping practices for gifted and talented learners and tryout new reforms with moderation for groups of learners having difficulty in school. Document all reforms or changes made to ensure that what is used as replacement or reform is superior to what it replaces.
2. Press our state and national governments to make education their primary spending priority. It is THEIR responsibility, not that of businesses, corporations, private citizens or school boards.
3. Don't vote for anyone who doesn't see education as the primary national agenda.
4. Quit blaming the schools and teachers for what's wrong with society.
5. Quit depending on schools and teachers to have the "answers" for what's wrong with society.
6. Insist that schools focus on the academic preparation of students, and have parents take over teaching their own children things like getting along with others, how to say "no" to drugs and how to develop a sense of values and ethics.
7. Expect parents to take over providing academic enrichments and challenges for their children when the schools run out of money to do so.
8. Provide parents with training in social and communication skills development, chemical dependency, values clarification and psychological issues, and with ways to provide enrichment and challenge when they don't know how to do such things for their children.

The picture of gifted education is not totally clear in 1993. Visions of its future are like abstract or even impressionistic pictures of tomorrow. The realistic details of the canvas are only beginning to be revealed. I hope that each and every one of you will pick up your paintbrushes and contribute to the final masterpiece.

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